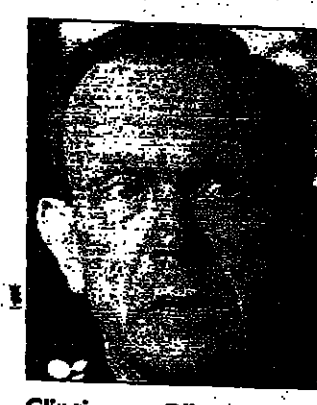


Grampian police chief stands his ground



By Jason Bennett, Crime Correspondent

THE stand-off over the future of beleaguered Grampian Chief Constable Ian Oliver took another dramatic turn yesterday when his own police board demanded his immediate resignation.

But last night, Mr Oliver who had already resisted an unprecedented call from Donald Dewar, the Secretary of State for Scotland, to "pack his bag and go", was still clinging on to his post, although he is said to have offered to bring forward his previously agreed official departure date from 31 August.

In a day of mounting frustration and anger, the Grampian police board passed a vote of no confidence in their chief constable and set a 2pm deadline for him to state his position. That came and went without anything being resolved.

But one man who did resign in the course of the afternoon. It was reported, was councillor Duncan Crawford, who had led the unanimous call at the police board for Mr Oliver's resignation.

Mr Crawford, a former policeman, said he was giving up his place on the board in disgust. He said the Chief Constable was trying to broker a deal about his departure. He added that Mr Oliver had treated the people of the north-east of Scotland with "absolute contempt", and seemed unable to differentiate between "political interference and democratic accountability".

Meanwhile, in the House of Commons, Mr Dewar faced questions about the extraordinary affair including the public slugging match between himself and Mr Oliver. He was also asked what procedures have to be followed for a Chief Constable to be sacked.

Mr Oliver had come under attack following a report by an outside force, Lothian and Border, under Deputy Chief Constable Graham Power, into Grampian's handling of the investigation into the murder of a nine year old boy. The report accused the force of a catalogue of failures and neglect.

Mr Oliver, his deputy David Beattie and assistant Peter Wilson were asked to leave the board meeting at midday as it went into private session. None of the three were prepared to comment, in marked contrast to the previous day when Mr Oliver had mounted a robust public defence of the force's actions during the inquiry into the death of nine-year-old Scott Simpson.

The Chief Constable will cease his duties from the end of next month, but will remain technically in post until 31 August which prevents his successor from taking over until September.

Frank Doran, the constituency MP for Scott Simpson's parents Dennis and Patsy, called for the law to be changed to enable the Chief Constable to be dismissed more easily. He has written to Mr Dewar calling for a review of the law. He said: "If the police board and the Secretary of State agree that a chief officer has permitted a culture in which incompetence and maladministration are evident, as indicated in the report into the handling of the Scott Simpson case, they should be able to act swiftly and decisively in the public interest."

End of line for the man who backed family values

THE BEST advice for anyone trying to understand the Murdoch family would be to take a look at its roots, writes Paul McCann. Keith Rupert Murdoch is the grandson of a Scottish Presbyterian minister.

The grandsons of the Kirk are neither temperamentally nor theologically ostentatious types and it is this streak which seems to have dominated Murdoch family affairs.

Despite the usual behaviour of millionaire businessmen in relation to their younger female employees there was no unseemliness in Rupert's marriage to Anna Torv. At least he was already divorced for two years when he met and married the diary columnist on his *Sydney Daily Mirror*.

Anna, the daughter of a Scottish mother and Estonian father who had emigrated to Australia when she was in her teens, soon gave up her journalism to have children and has been quoted as saying: "I don't think two people with powerful career drives can live comfortably together."

Even when years later she took creative writing classes and almost put her off for life. Mostly she has devoted herself to bring up her children: Elisabeth, 29, Lachlan, 26, and James, 24.

And very nicely brought up they were too. In the very best schools in London, New York and Los Angeles but with elements of Presbyterian normality thrown in.

Daddy would reportedly insist on their presence dressed and washed at breakfast every morning at 6 am before he went to work or jetted off around the globe. And despite the likelihood of one day inheriting an estimated £2bn they had to get themselves summer jobs for pocket money.

Reports of teenage rebellion are whispered of - Elisabeth left one of her expensive schools by mutual agreement, she didn't like them, and they thought her a little wild.

According to one biography when they were teenagers James and Lachlan were caught by Rupert watching what he described as "pornographic" films which worried him. In fact the

IN THE NEWS

THE MURDOCH DYNASTY

film was no more adult than most of Daddy's Twentieth Century Fox output.

All now all have eventually entered the family business. Most famously Lachlan Murdoch, who is current favourite to take over the dynasty. After studying at Princeton, Lachlan worked his way up the ladder, starting out as general manager of News Corp's Queensland Newspaper division where he was famed for starting work as early as his father and is currently in charge of the corporation's entire Australian operations.

Elisabeth reportedly owes her place as a runner for the top job to her mother. It was Anna who forced Rupert to consider placing his daughter as well as his sons in the race for succession.

Elisabeth went to Vassar in the United States, where she was instrumental in setting up a campus television station.

She did an 18-month stint with her husband, Elkin Pizani, running two Californian TV stations bought with a loan from papa and selling them for \$12m profit.

Anna's youngest son James first looked like making the biggest break with the empire. Complete with pierced ear, he ran a record label specialising in Hip Hop music after dropping out of Harvard. However, now even he has returned to the fold as vice-president for music and new media.

And low-profile Prudence - the daughter from Rupert's marriage to first wife Patricia - is connected. She is married to Alasdair MacLeod, circulation and sales director of the *Times*.

Recently the only worries for this close-knit, competitive family were rumours about Elisabeth's marriage being on the rocks. But now it seems that not even close family members are immune from the burn-out that affects those who live too closely to Rupert Murdoch.

Pandora, page 5



Murdoch dynasty: Prudence, Anna, Elisabeth, James and Lachlan, with a girlfriend; (below) baby Elisabeth and her parents. Main photograph: Big Pictures



MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Shortly after the couple's move to London in the early Seventies when Murdoch had just taken over the *News of the World*, two brothers, Nizamodeen and Arthur Hosain, planned to kidnap Anna Murdoch and demand a £1m ransom. Instead they bungled the attempt and snatched Muriel McKay, the wife of the chairman of the *News of the World*. Mrs McKay was never found and police believed she was murdered and fed to the pigs on the brothers' farm.

MEDIA TALE

Anna Murdoch wrote a novel entitled *Family Business* and is believed to have used scenes drawn from her husband's takeover of the *News of the World*. It tells the story of a woman who inherits a media business and turns it into an empire. Ironically, she then sells up when her children start bickering over their inheritance.

IN THE GENES

While she looks like her mother, Elisabeth Murdoch inherited her ruthlessness from her father. While running a California television station she made 18 of the 74 staff redundant and issued a "three-strikes" memo threatening sackings if there were three or more production errors during newscasts.

Paul McCartney tells of final moments at wife's bedside



Lady McCartney photographed at her East Sussex home by her daughter Mary a few days before her final trip to the US

SIR PAUL McCartney has paid tribute to his wife Linda's enormous courage in campaigning for vegetarianism and in her battle against cancer, writes Diana Blomfield.

In the first detailed statement since her death last week, he has also spoken of the final moments at her bedside.

The former Beatle's personal statement about his wife of 29 years reads: "This is a total heartbreak for my family and I. Linda was, and still is, the love of my life, and the past two years we spent battling her disease have been a nightmare."

"She never complained and always hoped to be able to

conquer it. It was not to be. Our beautiful children - Heather, Mary, Stella and James - have been an incredible strength during this time, and she lives on in all of them.

"The courage she showed to fight for her causes of vegetarianism and animal welfare was unbelievable."

"How many women can you think of who would single-handedly take on opponents like the Meat and Livestock Commission, risk being laughed at, and yet succeed?"

"People who didn't know her well, because she was a very private person, only ever saw the tip of the iceberg. She was the

kindest woman I have ever met; the most innocent.

"All animals to her were like Disney characters and worthy of love and respect. She was the toughest woman who didn't give a damn what other people thought."

"She found it hard to be impressed by the fact that she was Lady McCartney. When asked whether people called her Lady McCartney, she said 'Somebody once did - I think.'"

"I am privileged to have been her lover for 30 years, and in all that time, except for one enforced absence, we never spent a single night apart."

"When people asked why,

we would say - 'What for?'"

"As a photographer there are few to rival her. Her photographs show an intense honesty, a rare eye for beauty."

"As a mother she was the best. We always said that all we wanted for the kids was that they would grow up to have good hearts; and they have."

"Our family is so close that her passing has left a huge hole in our lives. We will never get over it, but I think we will come to accept it."

"The tribute she would have liked best would be for people to go vegetarian, which, with the vast variety of foods available these days is much easier than

many people think. She got into the food business for one reason only, to save animals from the cruel treatment our society and traditions force upon them."

"Anyone less likely to be a businesswoman I can't think of, yet she worked tirelessly for the rights of animals, and became a food tycoon."

"When told a rival firm had copied one of her products, all she would say was 'Great, now I can retire'. She wasn't in it for the money."

"In the end, she went quickly with very little discomfort, and surrounded by her loved ones."

"The kids and I were there

when she crossed over. They each were able to tell her how much they loved her."

"Finally I said to her: 'You're up on your beautiful Appaloosa stallion; it's a fine spring day, we're riding through the woods. The bluebells are all out, and the sky is clear blue.'"

"I had barely got to the end of the sentence, when she closed her eyes, and gently slipped away."

"She was unique and the world is a better place for having known her."

"Her message of love will live on in our hearts forever."

The statement is signed: "I love you Linda. Paul xxx xxx"

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Nurses warn over plans to charge for accidents

By Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

NURSES warned yesterday that government plans to raise millions of pounds by charging for the cost of treating road accident victims could add to patients' distress and undermine the principle of a free NHS.

Patients were frequently upset when they received demands for payments from hospitals for emergency treatment after an accident. It attempts to recover the costs from insurance companies were stepped up, it would start the NHS on the slippery slope towards an insurance-based service, the Royal College of Nursing's annual congress in Bournemouth was told.

Sheila Maye from Doncaster said: "The NHS is supposed to be free at the point of need. We should not be talking about recovering the costs from people who need the treatment. We should be talking about adequate funding of the service."

Under a little known provision of the Road Traffic Act 1988, hospitals are entitled to charge the drivers of vehicles involved in road accidents. £1.30 for emergency treatment of each person injured, which can be reclaimed from insurance companies. They are also entitled to claim up to £249 for in-patient treatment and up to £295 for out-patient treatment from the driver's insurance company.

Many NHS trusts do not bother to claim the money and latest figures show £9m is raised - 12 per cent of the total that could be claimed. Leicester Royal Infirmary raised the most, at £365,000, but some London teaching hospitals raised nothing.

In guidance issued last December, the health department ordered NHS trusts to step up their efforts to recoup the money. Ministers also signalled their intention to waive the £1.30 fee but to raise limits on the amounts that can be claimed from

insurance companies to reflect the true cost of treating accident victims, and to change the law to require the companies to pay up without waiting for a claim.

There are 320,000 serious traffic accidents each year, which costs the NHS over £100m. Nurses at the congress warned that if the whole of this cost were shifted to the insurance companies, it would trigger a sharp rise in premiums.

Derek Blackshaw, a nurse consultant and expert witness in accident cases, said: "Is this the thin end of the wedge towards an insurance-based Health Service? It could be a way of resourcing the trauma service."

He said he had been involved in the case of a young man who had been in treatment for five years at a cost of £900 a week after being hit by a car while crossing the road. "It was not his fault. If the cost doesn't come from the insurance company it will come from the NHS."

Other speakers described the distress that a demand for payment caused accident victims. Paul Cassidy, from north Lincolnshire, said he had seen patients come into his hospital and fling the money at the receptionist. "Accidents happen. I don't think we should charge for accidents. The victims are affected mentally and physically and I don't think they should be affected financially."

A spokeswoman for the Health Department said legislation to ensure recovery of the money from insurance companies would be introduced when parliamentary time allowed. A simple tariff would be devised aimed at recouping the full cost of treating accident victims by averaging it across all cases.

Nurses are demanding panic alarms, security guards and training in self-defence to cope with rising violence on hospital wards. Verbal and physical assaults are commonplace and hospitals are doing too little to protect their staff, delegates said.



Just the tonic: Tanner, a border collie stands guard after playing with Tom, 11, (right) and Mohamed, 10, (in bed), who are receiving treatment in the haemo-dialysis unit at Guy's hospital in London, where a conference yesterday was told that taking animals into wards can hasten patients' recovery. Photograph: Rui Xavier

Sick children pepped up by animal magic

By Linus Gregoriadis

TAKING animals into hospital wards helps children get better faster, it was claimed yesterday.

Speaking at Guy's Hospital, at the launch of a conference on animal therapy, the entertainer Rolf Harris told how four-legged creatures can speed up the treatment of sick humans.

He said: "It makes a tremendous difference to the kids to be able to have animals brought in. It gives them a sense of reality, in a funny sort of way."

"More and more people are becoming aware of the role that animals can have and all of its benefits. The kids just forget themselves. They can be in here a long time for treatment and it makes it go so quickly."

The presenter of BBC's *Animal Hospital* told how his passionate interest in the treatment was sparked by the sight of a young patient's reaction to a dog.

He said: "There was one particular Bosnian boy who was in absolute agony. He could not get out of bed to do his physio treatment."

But when he saw the dog it reminded him of his pet back home and he could then do his physio. It just delights the kids and takes their minds off the misery of the pain."

Doctors and animal therapy experts were among conference delegates at the London hospital yesterday for the event which was organised by the Children in Hospital and Animal Therapy Association (Chata).

Sandra Stone, a former nurse and the charity's founder, said she initially set up the scheme - which

is now operating in several hospitals - to help terminally ill children.

She said that animals were carefully screened for infection before entering the wards, adding: "What we need to do is remain professional and keep our standards of excellence."

Mary Whyham, from the Society for Companion Animal Studies, said the conference would provide an important insight into animal-assisted therapy.

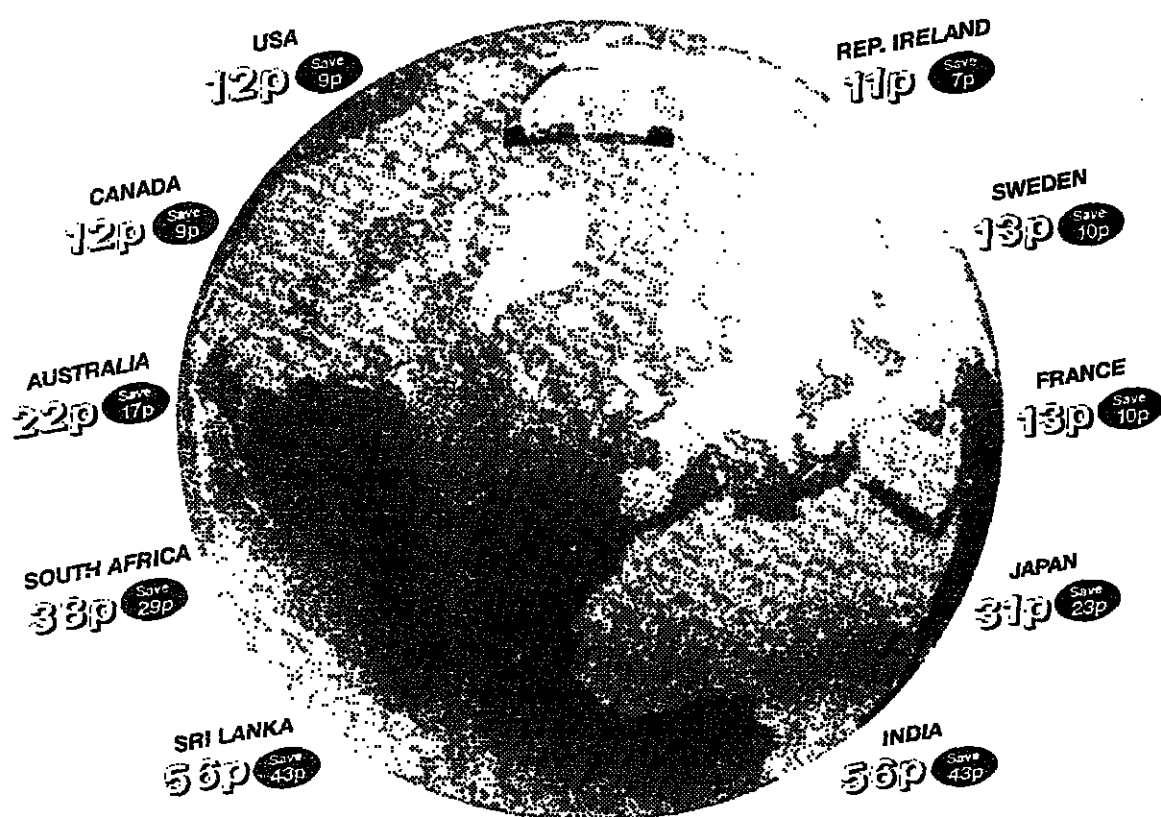
She said: "Children undergoing surgery and long-term hospitalisation often feel frightened and vul-

nerable, and hospital staff and parents alike are constantly seeking the most sensitive and comfortable way to help the child through trauma."

Rolf Harris took two dogs - a border collie and a Labrador - into the haemo-dialysis ward, where teenagers are awaiting transplants or who have had transplant complications.

Michelle Anderson, 16, from south-west London, told of the benefits of the contact with animals. "It's brilliant when the animals come. It's only once a week, but we all look forward to it," she said.

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Knives found in murder suspect raid

KNIVES, a sword and an air gun were hidden in the home of two brothers suspected of being implicated in the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence, the inquiry into his racist stabbing was told yesterday.

But the dawn raid in May 1993 on the house where Neil and Jamie Acourt lived with their mother in Eltham, south London, was two weeks after the killing - so it was unlikely to produce the murder weapon, the officer in charge of the search told the hearing.

Stephen, an 18-year-old schoolboy, was killed in a racially-motivated attack in Eltham in April 1993.

Detective Sergeant David Kirkpatrick told the inquiry at the Elephant and Castle, south London that he did not know why the search was not ordered within days of the killing.

He said a knife was discovered behind the television in Neil Acourt's bedroom. In another room, a knives were found, plus a blood-stained jacket.

Ulster shooting victim dies

A CATHOLIC council worker shot in Portadown, Co Armagh, died in hospital last night. He was shot in a council skip yard by a lone gunman who rode up on a bicycle, selected his victim and opened fire at close range before fleeing. The victim, in his 30s, was hit in the head and body and was taken to the nearby Craigavon Hospital.

Wildcat strike closes Calais

A WILDCAT strike by French seafarers closed the port of Calais yesterday, bringing travel chaos to British travellers and truckers.

Three ferries run by the newly formed joint company P&O Steena Line were unable to dock at Calais because of the action. The ferries had to return to Dover and from early afternoon the company instead ran services from Dover to Zeebrugge in Belgium.

Hoffman daughter guilty

THE adopted daughter of American film star Dustin Hoffman was yesterday ordered to carry out 180 hours of community service after she admitted embezzling more than £5,000 while working for a British company. Karina Hoffman-Birkhead, 32, of Mildenhall, Suffolk, pleaded guilty at Newmarket magistrates.

Mr Gordon Taylor

A REFERENCE in the Mystic Deb column last week to the Chief Executive of the Professional Footballers Association admitting having taken kickbacks was entirely fictional and intended as a joke. We regret if it was read seriously in any way, and apologise to Mr Taylor for any embarrassment caused. A donation has been made to the PFA Benevolent Fund.

Naval officer wins £125,000 for sex bias

A NAVAL officer who failed to get promotion because she did not go to sea was yesterday awarded £125,000 compensation.

Chief Petty Officer Pauline Telfer was passed over for the rank of warrant officer despite being recommended for the post four years running. An industrial tribunal panel ruled that the Royal Navy had discriminated against her because it selected sea-going ratings over her.

CPO Telfer joined the Navy as a Wren in 1972 before women were able to go to sea, but in 1990 policy was changed to allow female ratings to serve at sea. Existing Wrens were allowed to volunteer, but also permitted to continue their service on the same terms as before.

CPO Telfer, 42, told the tribunal that she never volunteered because she had already been told she was eligible to be a warrant officer. She was unaware she would be discriminated against for not volunteering for sea service and had she known she would have gone to sea to gain promotion.

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New digs for an old Digger

FOLLOWING yesterday's news of Rupert Murdoch's separation from his wife, Pandora can reveal that the media tycoon - primarily based in Los Angeles and New York until now - has found new digs a block from the White House in Washington DC. The flat-hunting was completed in strict secrecy two weeks ago by *Sunday Times* columnist and Murdoch's "economic guru", Irwin Steltzer. The location is convenient to Rupert's favourite restaurant in the capital, Les Halles, but Washington insiders doubt he is planning to spend more time in the capital strictly for gourmet reasons. Steltzer, a very wealthy man, is one of Murdoch's closest friends and a long-time Aspen neighbour. Thus the new bachelor's move to Washington makes sense on grounds of friendly companionship alone. But there is also a rumour Murdoch has his acquisitive eye on the Mooney-owned *Washington Times*. Although this would give him daily access to the most powerful politicians in his adopted country, there is no evidence that the *Times* is for sale. Pandora expects that Murdoch's true motives for setting up house near the Potomac will become clear sooner rather than later.

Mandelson's anniversary ode

NEW LABOUR is going to celebrate the anniversary of its first year in power with a gala dinner, hosted by Mo Mowlam, in Newcastle on 1 May. A colleague of Pandora's rang Millbank and asked what entertainment would be provided on the big night out. Last year's election night victory celebration, you may recall, featured the pop group D-Ream singing "Things can only get Better". This year, according to the Labour spokesperson, "Peter Mandelson will be giving a speech." Tony Blair, unfortunately, will be "off-message" that evening, as he must attend a pre-summit dinner for EU finance ministers in Brussels. Other ministers should be warned that such a flimsy excuse will not suffice to absolve them should they dare to miss Mandy's superb oration.

Voice of Fayed's regal return

MICHAEL COLE, having retired from the service of Mohamed Al Fayed, now seems to be returning to his roots as a BBC royal correspondent. Word has reached The Box that Cole recently signed a deal with BBC2's *Leviathan* documentary series. Cole (pictured) will be hosting a programme about the relationship between the turn-of-the-century Prince of Wales, Prince Edward, and his bride, Princess Alexandra. According to Neil Cameron, editor of *Leviathan*, "Cole obviously sees parallels between Edward and Alexandra and Prince Charles and Princess Diana, between the two princes' infidelity and the two princesses' loneliness." Anyone who watched Cole's television performance when he assured the world that his boss had been privy to the dying princess's so-called "last words" must wonder just what the devil is the BBC playing at here.



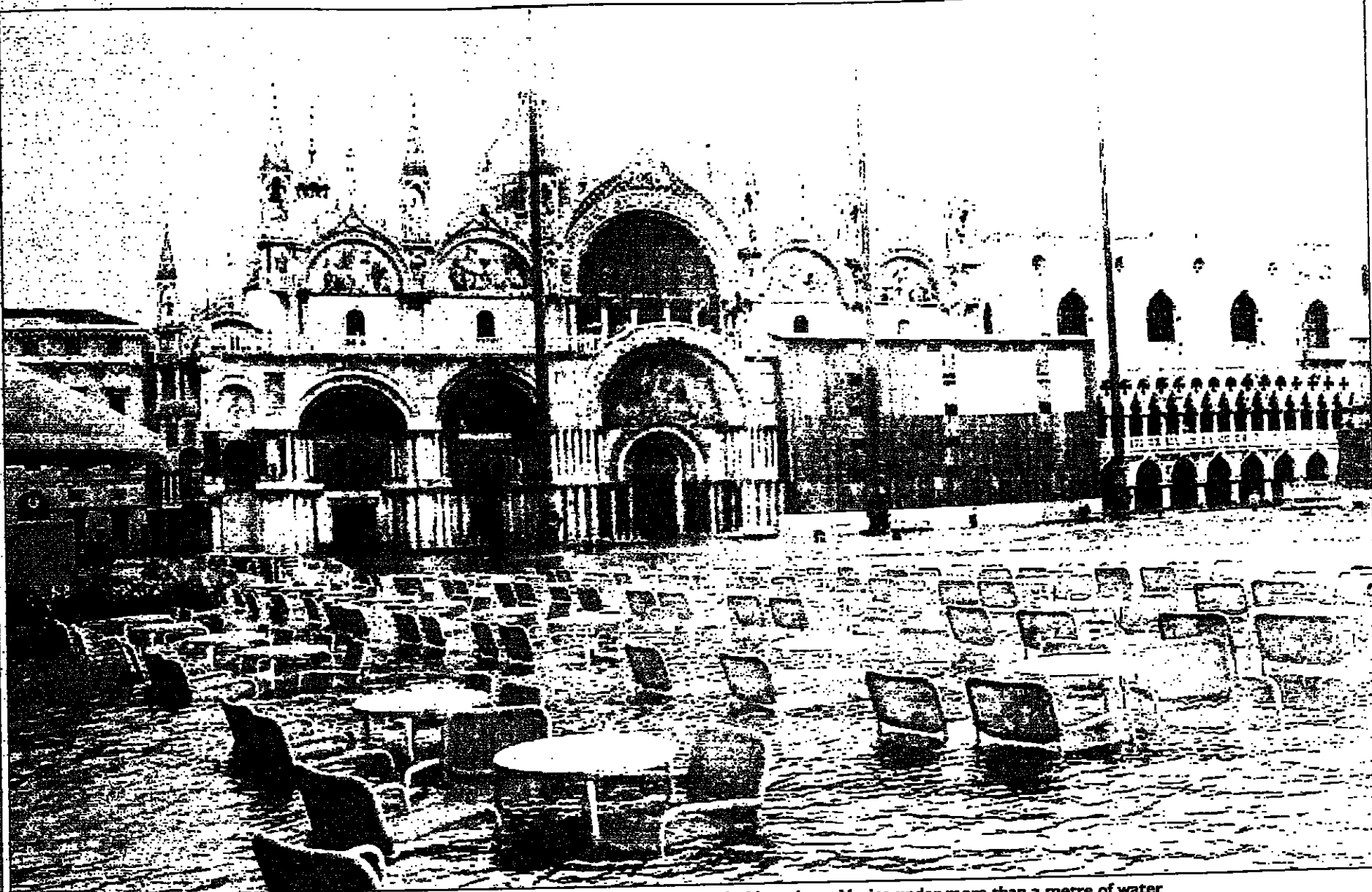
Time for a quick nuke

THERE are times when carefully measured, supposedly reassuring words can strike more dread than calm into a listener. Such a time occurred on Monday in the House of Lords. Responding to a question from Lord Jenkins of Putney about discussions between the Government and the Americans on nuclear weapons in the Gulf, Lord Gilbert, Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence, replied: "Your Lordships may be relieved to know that Her Majesty's Government are not engaged in planning any nuclear wars at this time." But what about after lunch?

Jacko going underground

LIKE Rupert Murdoch, the controversial rock star Michael Jackson has been house-hunting recently. In Jackson's case, the new neighbourhood is on the posh East Side of Manhattan. Having examined the \$30m (£18m) former Vanderbilt home on 62nd Street, with its 14 maids' rooms, 17 fireplaces and unique children's floor with its own stage, the begoggled king of Neverland pronounced himself well pleased - except for the house's lack of a private back entrance. According to *New York* magazine, negotiations have been launched to acquire the house across the street so that a tunnel can be dug between the two, allowing Jackson a secret escape passage.

Pandora



Rising damp: Floods in St Mark's Square 18 months ago after heavy rain combined with a high tide to leave Venice under more than a metre of water

Venice historian attacks Italian delay

By Michael McCarthy
Environment Correspondent

VISCOUNT Norwich, chairman of Britain's Venice in Peril Fund, yesterday attacked the Italian government's delay in dealing with the threat to Venice from world-wide sea-level rise, terming it "unacceptable".

He spoke out after a London seminar organised by the fund in which the danger to the city from the world's rising waters was spelt out in detail, and contrasted with steps that other maritime cities, including London, have already taken to protect themselves.

Lord Norwich - who as the historian John Julius Norwich is Venice's chronicler - said that the Italian government had recently put back for a further nine months the long-awaited decision to proceed with its system of massive sea gates to control tidal surges into the city, which was first proposed in 1973.

"They did say they would give us a firm decision by 30 June this year, and this has now been postponed," he said. "I now assume the date to be 31 March 1999, when we will get a definitive undertaking by the Italian government, which will first of all say exactly what it proposes to do, and then begin to do it."

However, Lord Norwich said, something needed to be done "on a very large and important scale in the very near future". He went on: "We are forced to admit that 32 years on from the devastating flood of 1966 nothing has yet been created and Venice is still as vulnerable. This is obviously an unacceptable situation."

The Venice in Peril Fund, which is the British Committee for the Preservation of Venice, was founded as a direct result of the tidal flood of 4/5 November 1966, which inundated the whole city. It has hitherto spent its energies on restoration, helping work on more than 20 of the city's greatest monuments.

Yesterday's seminar was a departure, and not only in a scientific direction: it had an unmistakable political thrust, aimed at spotlighting the dangers of further delay in facing the threat of a rising sea level.

A succession of experts, headed by Sir John Houghton, chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution and the man leading the UN's scientific investigation of climate change, spelt out how the sea-level rise predicted for the next 50-100 years because

of global warming could bring flooding on a daily basis.

Professor Trevor Davies, head of the climatic research unit at the University of East Anglia, said that quite apart from sea-level rise, Venice's position at the top of the Adriatic makes it particularly vulnerable to storm surges, while David Wilkes, the man in charge of London's Thames Barrier, and Marinus van Zetten, his equivalent from Rotterdam, explained how their respective cities had already set up their flood defences.

Professor Edmund Penning-Rowell from the University of Middlesex, who - as reported in

yesterday's *Independent* - believes Venice's sea-gates scheme will be a waste of money, had a frank exchange of views with Roberto Frassetto, the oceanographic engineer who helped design it. "I hope it will proceed," Dr Frassetto said.

In a statement after the meeting, the fund said: "Venice in Peril and all the participants at this symposium emphasise the inevitable and growing dangers in not confronting the risk to Venice, one of mankind's most extraordinary and beautiful creations, and they urge the Italian government to come to a speedy decision over the protection of the city."

Hoddle kicks off song for the World Cup

By Louise Jury

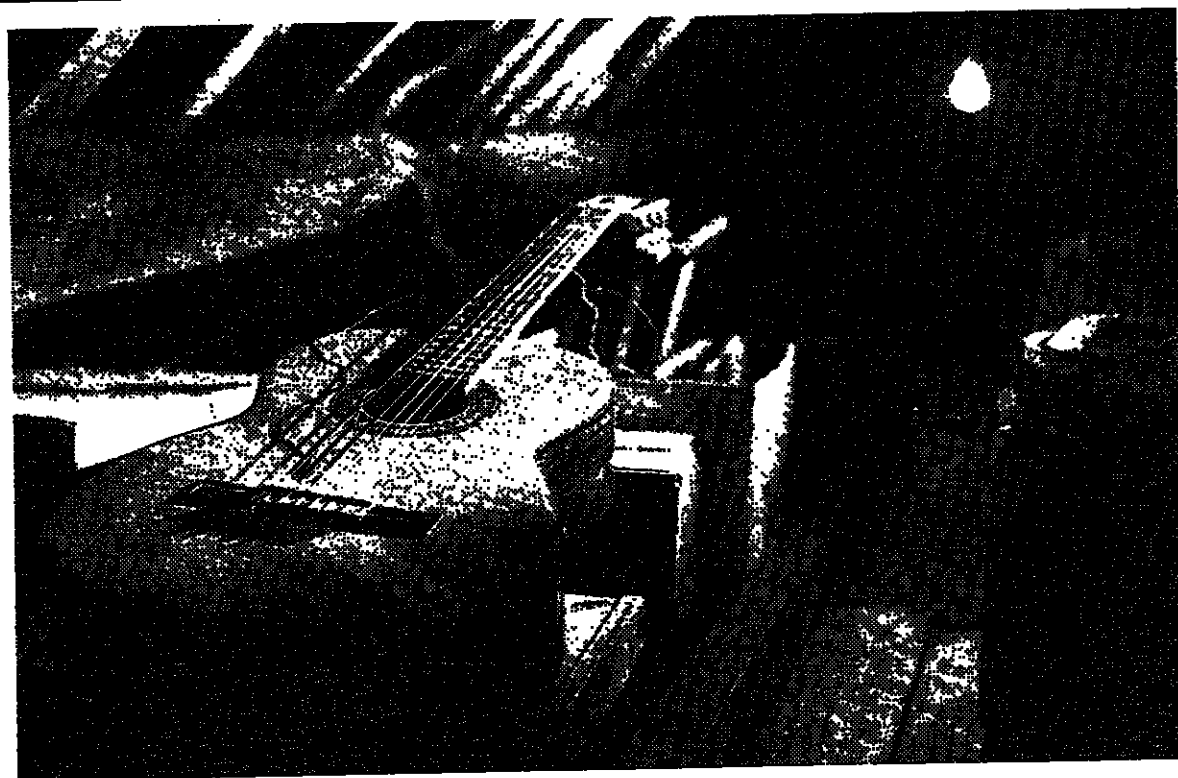
THE song which it will be impossible to avoid this summer is unveiled today.

England's anthem for the World Cup, teaming the unlikely combination of indie bands and the Spice Girls, hits the radio airwaves this morning before its formal launch at Wembley Stadium when England play Portugal tonight.

"On Top of the World" is an upbeat number with what one record company executive described as a jaunty chorus. Glenn Hoddle, the England coach, who has brought in a

faith healer, Eileen Drewery, to assist his side, said he hoped it would be at least as successful as "Three Lions", the Skinner and Baddiel Euro'96 hit with the Lightning Seeds. "On Top of the World" is where we want to be on 12 July (World Cup final day)," he said. The song was originally penned by the Smiths' guitarist Johnny Marr and Ian McCulloch of Echo and the Bunnymen five years ago.

Today's version was written by McCulloch, who performs on it alongside the Spice Girls, Tommy Scott from Space and Simon Fowler of Ocean Colour Scene, but no footballers.



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Drug link to crime revealed in tests

By Ian Burrell
Home Affairs Correspondent

MORE than 60 per cent of criminal suspects who agreed to be tested for illegal drugs proved positive, according to Home Office research revealed yesterday.

In the Trafford area of Greater Manchester, 78 per cent of those tested had used drugs.

The drugs minister, George Howarth, said the research demonstrated the link between drugs and crime and showed a clear need for the Government's new Drug Treatment Orders.

The orders, which will begin in pilot form in September, will force offenders to undergo treatment for their addiction or else be sent to prison.

"The Government has made clear its commitment to breaking the vicious circle of drugs and crime," said Mr Howarth. "Fast-track treatment will be tough on the causes of drug-related crime."

Nearly 20 per cent of those tested in five areas across England and Wales during 1996-7 were using heroin, which Customs chiefs said last week was being imported in alarming quantities. One in 10 of the suspects showed positive for cocaine.

The research, based on urine tests, revealed traces of cannabis in 46 per cent of those tested.

But Mike Goodman, director of the drugs charity Release, warned against making a link between the soft drug and other criminal activity. "Cannabis stays in the system for up to 30 days so the fact that it's been detected does not show any causal link between its use and the

commitment of a crime, apart from some kind of lifestyle association," he said.

The study approached nearly 1,000 people arrested in the five police stations, selected to be "reasonably representative of urban Britain", said Home Office statistics chief Chris Nuttall.

Six hundred people agreed to be tested for a range of drugs. Most can only be detected in urine for a few days after use, while cannabis stays in the system for three to four weeks.

The results for positive tests for any illegal drug were: Sunderland 49 per cent, Nottingham 56 per cent, Cambridge 68 per cent, Hammersmith, west London 73 per cent and Trafford 78 per cent.

A similar study in the United States found just 7 per cent of people arrested were using heroin - compared to some 18 per cent in Britain.

Cannabis was also more common in Britain than the US, where only one third of suspects tested positive.

But 40 per cent of Americans arrested had used cocaine.

The total cost of drug-related acquisitive crime was estimated at £2.5bn in a second Home Office report released yesterday.

Some 130,000 "problem" users need an average of £10,000 a year to feed their drug habits, said Michael Hough of South Bank University.

They fund half of the £1.3bn a year they spend on drugs through property crime but the goods they steal raise only one-third of their true worth when sold on.

The report found that 97 per cent of drug users did not have a problem with their drug use, a finding which was contested by Mr Howarth.

Don't punish cannabis users, says BMA

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

THE BRITISH Medical Association yesterday threw its weight behind MPs who have been campaigning for cannabis to be legalised for therapeutic use by urging the Home Secretary not to punish sufferers for taking the drug illegally.

A BMA team complained to a Lords committee investigating the scientific use of the drug that the Home Office appeared to be dragging its heels in licensing trials for developing drugs derived from cannabis. There had been no response to 14 requests for licences, the peers were told.

"If a patient is not suitable for a trial, and there are no other alternatives available, then we do believe they should be treated sympathetically in terms of the law and any penalty where they are using herbal cannabis for their own therapeutic benefit," Professor Vivienne Nathanson told the Lords committee on science and technology.

Professor Nathanson, head of the BMA's professional resources and research group, said she believed there could be a big worldwide demand for a cannabis-based drug which could relieve some of the symptoms of muscular dystrophy, muscle spasms, glaucoma, vomiting after chemotherapy and chronic pain.

"The numbers of patients who might benefit in a worldwide context may be very considerable," she said.

The committee is focusing on the scientific value of developing cannabis, which it heard had fallen out of use after the Victorian era, when newer drugs became available. The BMA team told the peers that once drugs were devel-

oped, it was likely they would be administered in the future by use of inhalers.

But the BMA said smoking a cannabis joint could be five times more carcinogenic than a tobacco cigarette. The BMA panel came down firmly against legalisation of cannabis for recreational use.

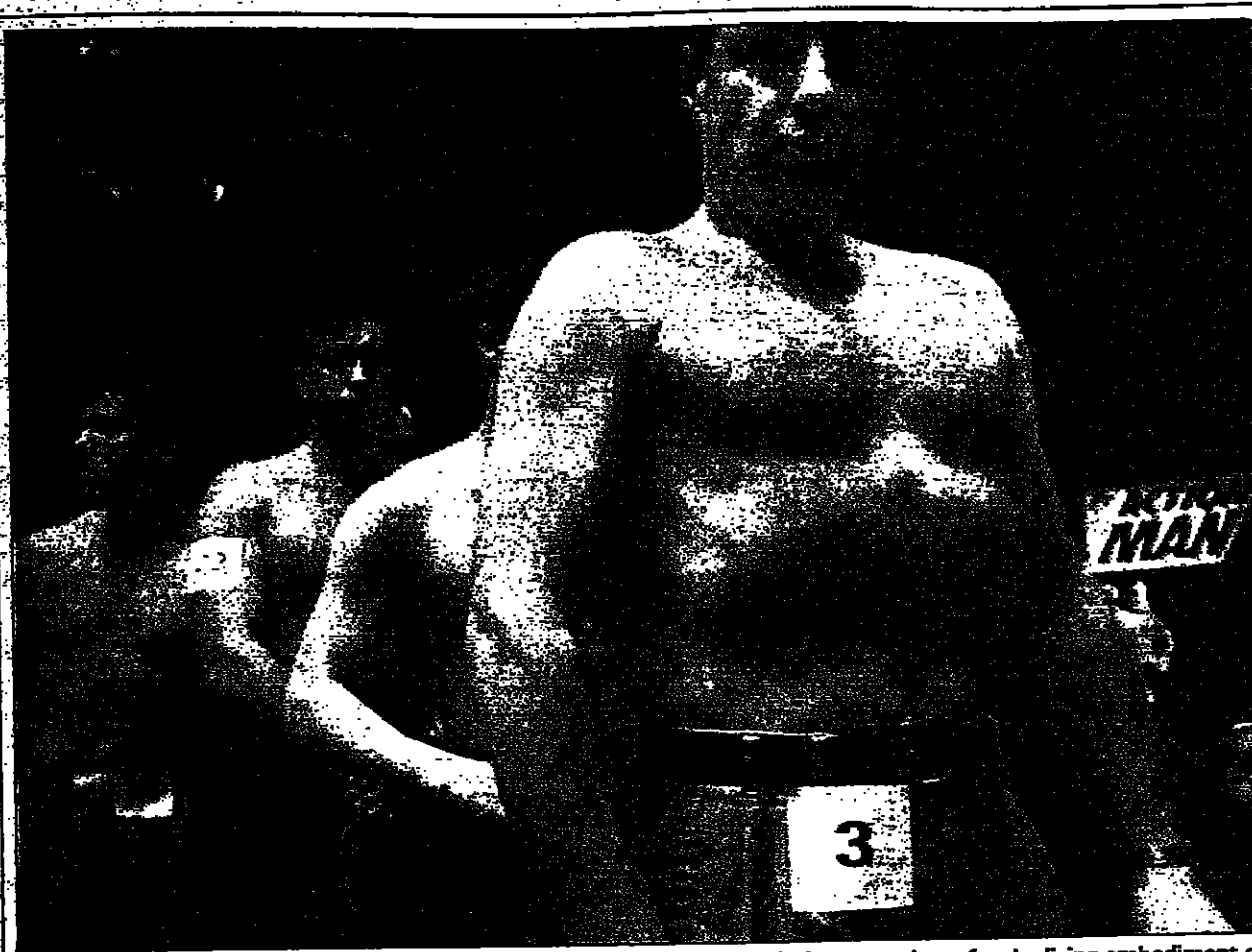
"Because of the way in which it is smoked, a single cannabis joint delivers the equivalent in carbon monoxide, irritants and carcinogens of 4-5 tobacco cigarettes and carries similar cardiovascular and respiratory health risks including the risk of lung cancer," said Professor Heather Ashton, Emeritus Professor of Clinical Psychopharmacology.

Professor Ashton, who was the consultant writer for the BMA report, *Therapeutic uses of Cannabis*, told the peers that her own students in Newcastle were also reporting dependency on cannabis, which was stronger now than 10 or 20 years ago.

The BMA is calling for research into developing synthetic forms of cannabis to avoid the side effects - including getting "high" - in the use of the drug for therapeutic use.

The health risks associated with smoking cannabis, including possible passive smoking by the families of cannabis users, reinforced the BMA's case for new forms of the drug to be developed.

But the team stressed that there were problems in developing drugs which could avoid the side-effects associated with cannabis. There were also difficulties in establishing accurate tests for use of the drug, which had made it so far impossible to develop a roadside test for drivers like the breath test for alcohol.



Breathing in: Candidates waiting to be judged in the search by Hasbro UK, the toy-makers, for the living embodiment of Action Man; hopefuls must be tough, square-jawed and willing to face the arch enemy, Dr X. Photograph: Andrew Buurman

Diana judge to hold court

By John Lichfield
in Paris

AGATHA CHRISTIE would, doubtless, have approved. The judge investigating the accident which killed Diana, Princess of Wales, plans to assemble almost all the witnesses and participants for a "mass confrontation" on 5 June.

The intention is to try to reconcile inconsistencies and flush out new scraps of information before the eight-month-old investigation reaches its conclusion, probably by the end of June. The 10 photographers who are accused of helping to cause the accident, and another dozen or so eye-witnesses, are expected to attend. The sole survivor of the crash, the bodyguard Trevor Rees-Jones will not, however, be asked to take part.

The event is reminiscent of the final chapter of a mystery novel, but it seems unlikely that Judge Hervé Stéphan will be

able, Poirot-like, to point to one clear culprit, or to one clear cause of the accident.

The "mass confrontation" will, among other things, try to sort out conflicts of evidence between the paparazzi photographers who were pursuing Diana's party and eye-witnesses to the crash.

The conference will also try to piece together the available evidence on the "second car" which may have been involved, probably a white Fiat Uno.

The investigation has not excluded the possibility that faults in the Mercedes - in the braking system or the air-bags - may have contributed to the accident. Overall, however, the investigation remains more or less where it was at the beginning: the most likely cause of the accident is thought to be the speed of the Mercedes, coupled with the condition of its driver, Henri Paul, who had consumed three times the permitted level of alcohol.

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Cook takes ethical third way on policy

By Kim Sengupta

THE Government yesterday unveiled its record on putting human rights at the heart of British foreign policy, and pledged to build on the achievements.

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said the days have gone for Britain to go around lecturing unsavoury regimes. It is far better to listen and promote reform. That, he said, is the Third Way, and the basis of the Government's approach to human rights.

At the launch of the "Human Rights Report", Mr Cook said the aim of the Third Way was "not to row or bow-low" but to work in partnership across the world to promote reform.

The Foreign Secretary added that there were, however, "occasionally times when it is right to condemn publicly, loudly and firmly". He cited the example of Nigeria, where the military ruler, General Sani Abacha, has declared himself the sole

candidate in presidential elections. Mr Cook continued: "An election with one candidate is not a free and fair election. Democracy requires a choice."

Nigeria faces an October deadline from the Commonwealth to return to civilian rule.

Unlike the United States State Department's human rights list, Britain's is not overtly condemnatory. Mr Cook was asked by a Pakistani journalist why there was no criticism of alleged human rights abuses in Kashmir. The Foreign Secretary, who caused controversy with his reported remarks on the subject during a royal tour of the Indian sub-continent last year, responded drily: "I am not normally censured for saying too little on Kashmir."

Mr Cook said he had put human rights at the heart of Britain's foreign policy. He went on to chart what he said were Britain's successes in working with countries such as China and Indonesia, the banning of

landmines, and bringing an ethical dimension to arms sales.

However, the human rights organisation Saferworld criticised the Government for granting export licences for sales to countries with poor civil rights records.

The organisation estimated 86 new export licences have been granted to Turkey and 22 to Indonesia since Labour came to power. These included sales of small arms, machine-guns and accessories, bombs, torpedoes, mines, surveillance and tracking systems, water cannons, riot control agents, toxicological agents and rockets.

Labour MP Ann Clwyd, who campaigns for an end to such arms contracts, said: "I think this trade continues with only limited regard for the effects it has in increasing violence or the impact on human rights. I think that Indonesia was the first big test for the Government and on that test it has clearly failed because not a lot has changed."



Robin Cook and Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development, launch the human rights report. Photograph: John Sillwell/PA

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Iraq seminar says children are priority

By Kim Sengupta

EVERY effort must be made to channel aid to Iraqi children suffering in the aftermath of the Gulf war, a major international seminar in London agreed yesterday.

The humanitarian conference, which brought together all 15 EU member states, the European Commission, the United Nations and charities, has formulated a range of ideas on how best to implement the oil for food programme, Foreign Office sources stated.

The details would be considered by the UN in New York, but in the meantime the British government is expected to give increased public funds to charities operating in Iraq.

Clare Short, the Secretary of State for International Development, has already announced a £7m food, medicine and mine-clearing package on a bilateral basis for areas controlled by the Baghdad government.

Delegates to the London conference pledged to "eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic delays and obstructions" while ensuring that "nothing done in the way of short-term humanitarian assistance should create a culture of dependency or in other ways undermine the long-term interests of the Iraqi people".

It was also decided that there was a need for "greater prioritisation" and detailed attention must be paid to the plight of children in Iraq, especially those aged under five.

However, Foreign Office minister Derek Fatchett stated that Saddam Hussein's government must allow the international community to carry out its humanitarian work. He continued: "We cannot succeed if we have got one hand tied be-



hind our back. It is the Iraqi government that can untie that. If they can provide that co-operation the chances of improvement will be immense."

"Sadly for too long Iraq has refused to co-operate fully. This must change if the organisations represented at this conference are going to be successful in achieving this objective of helping the people of Iraq."

The EU Humanitarian Affairs Commissioner, Emma Bonino, had suggested it might be time to reconsider the sanctions against the Baghdad government. But Mr Fatchett rejected this for the time being, adding: "We will support the lifting of sanctions once there is compliance of the Security Council resolutions."

Ms Short challenged to either lift sanctions or not go through the exercise of humanitarian efforts said: "I think it would be wrong for any human being in the light of the political situation we are in to turn away from the Iraqi people and not do our best immediately and instantly while the wider political situation is resolved."

The Independent and Independent on Sunday's Iraq appeal has so far raised £88,000. The fund will be used to send medicines to Iraq to help 2,000 children with cancer.

Please send cheques, made out to The Independent Iraq Appeal, to: PO Box 6870, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5BT.

Prescott asks Tube chief to stand down

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

THE Government's plans for leasing London's Tube to the private sector claimed its first victim yesterday when the Tory-appointed chairman was asked to stand down.

Peter Ford, 59, was brought in by John Major in 1994 as chairman of London Transport after winning a reputation as a union-busting, strike-breaking director of the shipping company P&O.

However, he met his match in the form of the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, a former seaman and trade unionist, who took the chance to remove Mr Ford from his post in restructuring LT.

Mr Prescott said that he had decided to bring in a part-time non-executive chairman. He added that Mr Ford had been "asked to vacate the chairman's job" and would leave LT on 22 April.

Despite his Tory credentials,

Mr Ford clashed with Conservative ministers as well as Tony Blair's Sir George Young, the last Conservative secretary of state for transport, reprimanded Mr Ford after privatisation plans appeared in newspapers days after LT had been briefed about them.

Despite a £365m cash boost wrung from the Treasury by Mr Prescott, the Tube is still facing a cash crisis. The unions - notably the RMT - have also attacked Mr Prescott's plans warning that they could mean higher fares for Londoners.

What is unclear is who will be running London's transport system in the run-up to the mayor taking over in 2000.

The new post will be crucial to ensuring the success of both the Government's plans for the capital's new constitutional bodies and also its aim to promote public transport.

Those who were said to be considered for the post include Steve Norris, the articulate former Tory minister.

Twenty minutes homework for all four-year-olds

By Judith Judd
Education Editor

FOUR-year-olds should spend 20 minutes a day on homework and 16-year-olds two and a half hours, according to Government guidelines published yesterday. Ministers also announced 8,000 out-of-school study centres to provide state-school pupils with similar opportunities to those available for children who attend private "crammers".

The voluntary guidelines suggest how homework should increase as pupils move up the school. For four-year-olds the time should be spent reading with parents and learning to listen and respond. Formal homework should begin at the age of seven. Research done two years ago found that 43 per cent of 10-year-olds have no regular homework and half are spending three hours or more a night watching television.

But an unpublished study by the standards watchdog, the Office for Standards in Education, has shown homework plays a vital role in raising standards. One experiment in Tower Hamlets, east London, one of the country's poorest areas, found standards rose by 30 per cent

Out of hours

Reception year	20 minutes a day (including 10 mins reading)
Years one and two	30 minutes (20 minutes reading)
Years three and four	40 minutes (20 minutes reading)
Years five and six	50 minutes (20 minutes reading)
Years seven and eight	45-90 minutes
Year nine	1-2 hours
Year 10 and 11	1½-2½ hours

over two years. In future, schools will be expected to include their homework expectations in home-school agreements to be introduced under legislation now before Parliament. Three out of five primary and most secondary schools are already following the guidelines.

David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education, said: "I know that parents will find these guidelines particularly valuable in giving them a reasonable idea of the amount of homework their children should expect. Many are unsure... whether children should normally expect to be set homework."

The aim was to give all children the sort of help which parents took for granted in a home where education was the norm. One facility offered by some schools was a telephone homework line which parents could

ring to check how much homework had been set.

Mr Blunkett said he was investigating whether homework should be set in the holidays. "Very little homework is given by state schools in the holidays. Quite a lot is given in private schools."

He was unapologetic about borrowing ideas from the private sector. The lottery-funded study centres might play a similar role to cramming, which provide extra tuition for fees. "If it makes a difference for the children whose parents buy education, there is no reason why it should not make the same difference for those who can't afford to pay."

The homework centres will be staffed by teachers and volunteers. They will entice pupils by offering art, drama and sport as well as academic study.

Susanne Moore, page 17

'Good idea, but will they do it?'

PARENTS backed the Government's plans for a network of homework clubs yesterday, but breathed a world-weary sigh about education ministers' new homework guidelines, writes Ben Russell.

Bev Edwards, from Silsoe, Bedfordshire, who has two children, said: "I have a daughter who has no problem with home-

work and a son who we nag about it. Before the election the children said 'we don't want Labour because they will make us do more homework'.

She backed Government plans for after school homework clubs. "I work, so I'm not always here when the children get home."

Another Bedfordshire par-

ent, Marian Townsend, who has two sons and a daughter at secondary school, chuckled when she heard the homework targets.

"It's a good idea, but things like homework do vary from child to child," she said. "One child could be very bright and do something very quickly while another takes twice the time."



Fruit and nut: The television chef Ainsley Harriot submerged in 25,000 "lookalike tomatoes" at a tasting session at Covent Garden yesterday. The star of programmes such as *Ready Steady Cook* and *Ainsley's Barbecue Bible* was urging shoppers to buy British and stem the flood of foreign imports in a campaign which follows a £5m investment to boost the flavour of home-grown varieties. Photograph: Kalpesh Lithiga

E.coli victims 'suffered from delays'

THE daughter of an elderly victim of the Scottish *E.coli* 0157 food poisoning outbreak yesterday made an emotional and anguished public plea for an explanation of delays in her mother's treatment.

Agnes Ralston claimed: "It had taken too long for her mother's case to be identified as food poisoning; too long for her to be admitted to hospital; and that there were delays before a move to another hospital with a specialist kidney unit was considered."

In an emotional appeal she told the inquiry in Motherwell: "Why wasn't mum taken to a hospital with a renal unit?"

"Why did she have to wait so long before they took her to hospital?"

"Why didn't environmental health tell us of the *E.coli* outbreak?"

"Why were there no ambulances in an *E.coli* outbreak?"

Her mother, Jessie Rogerson, 71, of Waterloo, Lanarkshire, died in Law Hospital, near Carlisle, on 27 November 1996, more than a week after attending a church lunch in Wishaw at which several pensioners were struck down by the bug. Up to 21 elderly people died in the outbreak, the world's worst, and in which the Wishaw shop of Lanarkshire butcher John Barr has been implicated.

Mrs Ralston said that when the seriousness of her mother's condition was first spotted by doctors, the family took her to hospital themselves because that was quicker than waiting for an ambulance on a snow-swept winter day.

"My mother had to have a

bin-bag tied to her to get her to hospital. She was so weak it took three of us to carry her down the stairs," she told the inquiry.

She said that although her mother had attended the church lunch, it was not until the following Sunday that she was admitted to hospital, and that the family doctor had first thought her mother's illness was caused by haemorrhoids and a stomach upset.

She said she had wanted her mother to be admitted earlier but had deferred to her doctor - and also said that while her

mother was admitted on the Sunday, she had been told that GPs were aware of the *E.coli* on the Friday and the Saturday.

In her appeal Mrs Ralston said: "Maybe if my mum had been treated differently or taken in earlier, would my mum have lived?"

"If my mum was going to die, she should have died with some dignity. My mum died in a great deal of pain, and if there are lessons to be learned, let's learn them. We don't want anyone, child or adult, to suffer the way my mum suffered."

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Saudi zealots lash moral 'deviants' into line

IT COULD only happen in Saudi Arabia. Only in Mecca are the *mutawwi* - the religious police - so zealous.

And only in Mecca, the holiest city in the Muslim world and the site of the annual Haj pilgrimage, could a journalist invoke their wrath with the mildest of criticisms, as Zuheir Kutbi found out to his cost.

Within hours of publishing a book criticising the powers of the often self-appointed guardians of Saudi morality, Mr Kutbi was arrested by the religious police, slung into jail and sentenced to be flogged.

The Saudi authorities cen-

Exclusive: Robert Fisk reports on the case of a journalist who dared to criticise the guardians of Islamic purity

sored all news of the embarrassing affair and only today - months after Mr Kutbi was detained, beaten in prison and, thanks to a friend in high places, released - has news of his treatment become known.

The *mutawwi* are chosen from the strict Wahabi sect to which the Saudi royal family belong, and spend much of their time cruising the streets of Saudi cities searching for signs of immorality - "immodestly" dressed women, men in the company of girlfriends, or bus-

ing parties. Mr Kutbi, like many Saudis, was fed up not only with the *mutawwi*'s behaviour but with their lack of education.

A journalist on a local paper, he wrote a short book on the morality police, unfavourably comparing their work with the purity of Islam's teachings.

"It was very mild stuff and not very daring," another Saudi journalist commented yesterday. "He never even mentioned the *mutawwi* by name, but merely hinted at them."

Mr Kutbi published his book

in Cairo, but the moment it arrived in Mecca he was dragged from his home to prison.

According to one report, the morality police initially tried to have him sentenced to death for "insulting the *ulama*" (religious leaders) but later accepted a sentence of flogging and several years' imprisonment.

Mr Kutbi spent weeks in jail while family friends sought his release.

Saved from the flogging, he was eventually freed - though only after what a relative cau-

tiously described as "a difficult few months" behind bars. It is said that he was badly beaten.

Many Saudis are frustrated with the activities of the *mutawwi*, seeing in their power an extension of Wahabi fanaticism. "They are as vicious as snarling dogs," a Saudi academic told *The Independent*. "They are rabid, these people, with their zany ideas. Kutbi said there should be no more religious police and he's right. The judicial system is corrupt."

"This man is from a well-

known Mecca family but he was manhandled and beaten by these so-called guardians of Islam."

As a consequence, Mr Kutbi can no longer write books or articles for Saudi newspapers. "He wasn't a great writer," an acquaintance said.

He's looked at as rather a simple guy who is intellectually unimportant. But he was trying to compare the people who say they are in charge of morals with the ideals of Islam. Now he cannot work again.

Not that Mr Kutbi could be surprised at his treatment. Saudi Arabia's appalling human rights record is abetted by a totally unfair system of criminal justice.

Amnesty International has condemned the "summary procedures and secret practices" of the three-tier court system as well as hundreds of executions carried out after trials which failed all international standards.

Many of the victims were Indians, Pakistanis, Sri Lankans

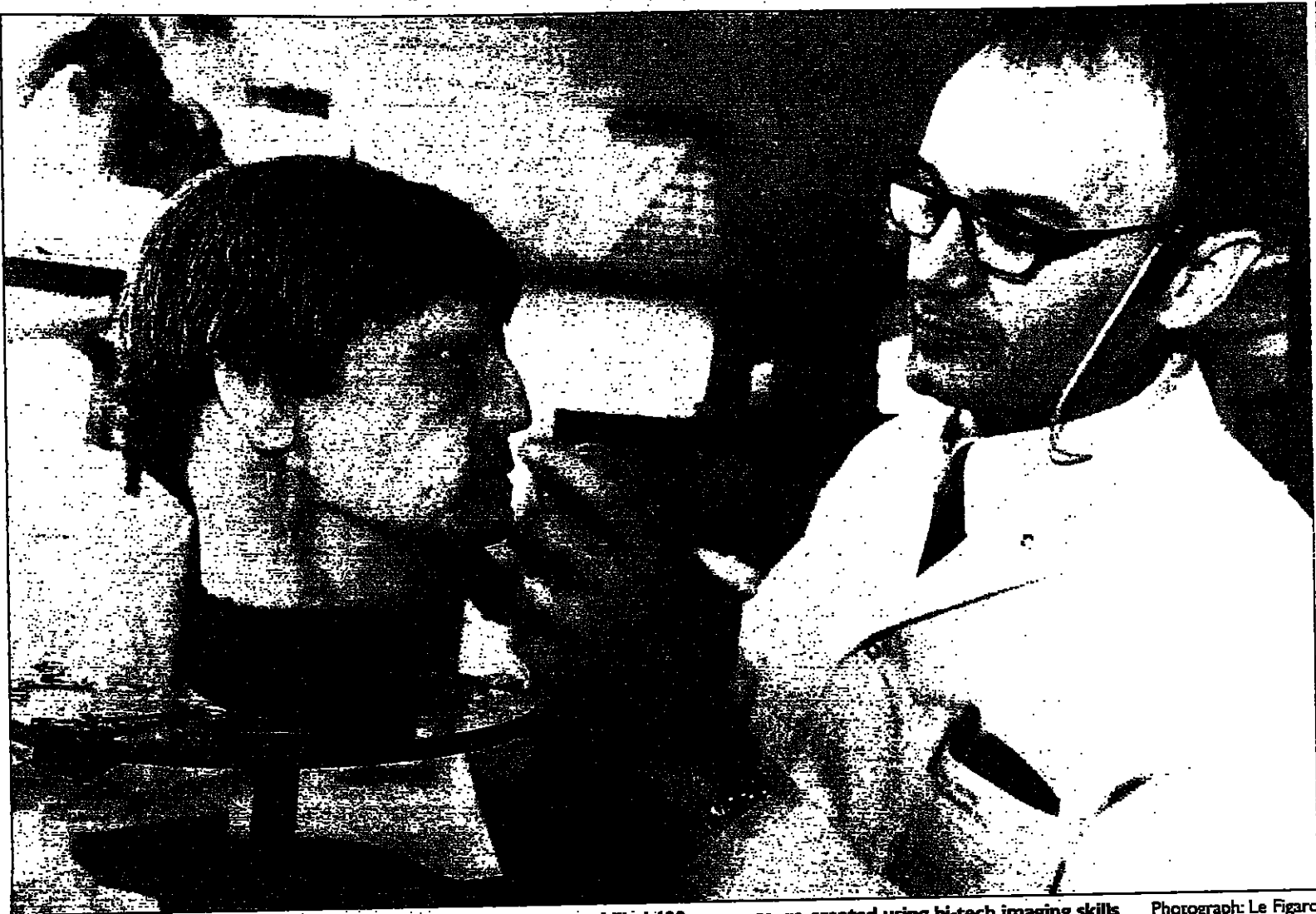
or Nigerians who were publicly beheaded after Friday prayers in front of city mosques.

Foreigners have been arrested for practising the Christian religion, and flogging is routine: an Egyptian named Mohamed Al al-Sayid, convicted of robbery in 1990, was sentenced to 4,000 lashes.

In 1996, a Taif court sentenced two schoolchildren to 210 and 150 lashes after they allegedly hit a teacher.

All this has occurred in the country which the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, last weekend described as "a cornerstone of stability" in the Middle East.

Science reveals face of medieval warrior



Past perfect: A French scientist with a model of the face of a man killed 600 years ago, re-created using hi-tech imaging skills. Photograph: Le Figaro

By John Lichfield
in Paris

IT MIGHT be a face from a crowded restaurant or from the Metro in the rush-hour. In fact, the startlingly modern features are those of a French peasant who died, violently, 600 years ago, during the Hundred Years War.

His photographic resurrection is the result of an un-

precedented collaboration between French archaeologists and the forensic laboratories of the gendarmerie. The skull of the man, aged 40 to 50, was exhumed from the vaults of a church in Sainte-Colombe de Chevilly-Larue, in what is now the outer suburbs of Paris.

He is believed to have died a violent death, possibly in the interminable Anglo-French skirmishing of the period.

Using advanced techniques of computerised image-creation, never before applied to a subject of this kind, the police scientists fashioned a three-dimensional model of the man's head. Although similar facial models have been made from even more ancient skulls, the French scientists believe this is a first to be achieved with such a degree of accuracy and realism. The computer programs in

the gendarmerie laboratories were able to deduce, from the configuration of the skull, the precise size and shape of the man's eyes, nostrils and mouth and the contours of his face. Similar work was done on a second skull of a woman, aged about 30, producing a photographic re-creation of her face - also startlingly modern - without the use of a three-dimensional model.

Blair under pressure to settle rival claims for Euro bank post

By Katherine Butler
in London

TONY Blair is faced with chairing an embarrassing showdown over who runs the European single currency next week, after finance ministers failed yesterday to resolve a worsening power struggle between the French and Dutch.

At talks in Luxembourg both countries dug in on their rival claims to the most powerful job in Europe, the presidency of the new European Central Bank.

The Dutch finance minister, Gerrit Zalm, said that for The Netherlands to back down would be "worse than losing to Germany in the World Cup".

Mr Zalm said the Dutch candidate commanded the support of a "massive majority" of European Union states and it would be unthinkable that he should now be "blown off the table".

The dispute means Britain, which holds the EU presidency and will chair next week's historic summit to launch the foundation of monetary union among 11 member states, is under pressure to avert a crisis.

"This is a big worry. It is a problem for all 15 member states, but it is up to the British Presidency, which is very objective, to solve the issue now," Mr Zalm said, as he left the talks.

The Dutch candidate for the post, Wim Duisenberg, head of the Bank's forerunner the European Monetary Institute, is up against the French central bank governor, Jean Claude Trichet. He emerged late last year as a surprise challenger.

Despite early speculation that Paris would back down, France has hardened its support for Mr Trichet in recent days. Lionel Jospin, the Prime Minister, threatened on Monday to veto Mr Duisenberg at the summit next week unless he agrees to split his eight-year mandate with Mr Trichet.

A senior European Commission official hinted that a deal could still emerge whereby Mr Duisenberg would agree to stand aside after the first four years of his term but there were no signals from the Dutch that this was a plausible outcome.

Gordon Brown the Chancellor of the Exchequer, chaired the Luxembourg meeting, the last opportunity for finance ministers to thrash out a deal before the crucial May summit.

He insisted that there was no legal obligation to settle choose a president before July when the European Central Bank is established.

But diplomatic sources from most countries believe that failure to agree on a candidate at the May summit would augur badly for future harmony within the Euro-zone.

In another sign of looming trouble over how the single currency should be run, the French yesterday raised strong objections to a German-led plan which would force all participating member states to sign up to hairshirt budgetary discipline for years to come.

Bonn wants to enforce the so-called "stability pact" which will penalise high-spending governments almost a year ahead of schedule. Ministers failed to agree the wording of a controversial draft declaration committing all Euro member states to fiscal discipline.

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"You've got a friend in the business."

By Teresa Poole
in Peking

WHILE China's exiled dissident Wang Dan is relishing his new-found freedom in the United States, another Wang has been arrested, charged and sentenced to two years in a labour camp for "disturbing the social order".

The alleged "crime" of Wang Tinglin, 43, a mathematics teacher in central Anhui province, was to meet a US-based democracy dissident who secretly entered China in February to help set up an opposition group.

This Mr Wang's misfortune is far unknown to the wider world - which means he can be summarily sentenced to "re-education through labour" without threatening Sino-US relations in the run-up to President Bill Clinton's planned visit at the end of June. He

is the third dissident to be sentenced within the past month.

Wang Dan's parole on Sunday was a sweetener for the Clinton visit, and that of Mary Robinson, the United Nations human rights commissioner, who is provisionally scheduled for an early June appearance in Peking.

Hong Kong-based human rights group say Wang Tinglin was arrested on 14 April and sentenced without trial the same day. Yang Qinheng, a Shanghai campaigner for free unions, was sentenced to three years' labour last month, and Shen Liangying, from Anhui, to two years this month.

Human rights groups fear the high-profile release and exile of China's most famous political prisoners obscures the fate of less well-known political activists.

Jonathan Mirskey, page 17



Flag waving: China's decision to free Wang Dan was a sweetener for President Clinton's forthcoming visit. Photograph: Reuters

By Mary Dejevsky
in Washington

LAWYERS for Microsoft and the US Justice Department were back in court yesterday at this time the appeal court - in the latest round of their battle over the computer market.

The government says Microsoft sought to use the dominance of its Windows software to squeeze out competitors in the market for browsers, which give access to the Internet. Microsoft says the authorities are trying, illegitimately, to dictate the terms of its innovation and development.

Internet Explorer as a condition of buying the now-ubiquitous Windows software - and then promote it. While Microsoft continues to argue that technically it is in the right, it has quietly conceded some of the marketing points.

It is amending contracts not only with US customers but also in Europe, where there have been similar complaints, so that computer-makers are no longer required to take the Internet Explorer browser exclusively. Most recently Microsoft has also said it will permit computer-makers to have a system that does not automatically display the Explorer icon when Windows is



Bill Gates: His empire is seeking a better image

At yesterday's hearing, Microsoft challenged the court's injunction on the marketing of its Internet Explorer browser, saying it is fully integrated into the Windows program and that without it Windows would malfunction. It also contended, on the basis of intercepted electronic mail messages, that Prof. Lessig was biased against Microsoft and should be replaced.

The Justice Department argued that its complaints are less about technology than about marketing and specifically about Microsoft's requirement that computer-makers accept the

first switched on. No ruling is likely on yesterday's appeal for three months.

But it is clear that this time will be used by both sides to gear up for the greater battle: for the hearts and wallets of the buying public. Microsoft, worried that it is being branded by consumers as just another big business in pursuit of a monopoly, is engaged in a campaign to represent its case to Congress and the media.

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — New name, new director — same smell. San Francisco's largest medical marijuana club was due to reopen yesterday with cosmetic changes designed to get around an eviction notice.

Dennis Peron, founder of the Cannabis Cultivators Club, and his followers complied on Monday with the eviction order won by the state attorney-general, Dan Lungren. Even as he ordered the club to be vacated, San Francisco Sheriff Mike Hennessey said he was sympathetic to the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes. He said he would not move against the club's successor agency, the Cannabis Healing Center, and its new director, Hazel Rogers.

Ms Rogers, 78, who smokes marijuana to treat her glaucoma, said: "I'm sort of apprehensive. I never ran anything before except a family. Well, I ran an office once. I don't know what to do."

Mr Peron started the club four years ago and was a prime mover behind the successful 1996 drive for the state's medicinal marijuana law, which allows sale of it to patients for medical use. The order to close the club was based on sales to care-givers rather than patients.

Mr Peron called it a technicality that Mr Lungen seized on, but took responsibility for the error. The two also are seeking the Republican gubernatorial nomination.

By Sam Jary

IT COULD be several days before investigators discover why Air France Flight 422 crashed into a Colombian mountain range on Monday, killing all 53 people on board, an Air France spokesman said yesterday.

As heavy rain continued to hamper police and rescue workers recovering the bodies, a Foreign Office spokesman said, there was an unconfirmed report that a British national had been killed in the crash.

The Boeing 727, a former Lufthansa aircraft which was less than 20 years old, was leased from TAME, an Ecuadorian airline, and flown

by retired pilots from the Ecuadorian air force. Martin Gonzalez, a civil aviation spokesman, said the jet crashed in broad daylight about 1500 short of the 10,000-ft summit only three minutes after take-off from El Dorado airport.

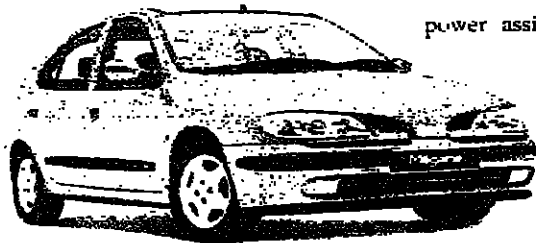
The wreckage of the Boeing was scattered over half a mile of mountainside just above the capital city. Its flight recorder, or black box, has been found and is being examined for clues to the accident.

Most of the passengers killed were Ecuadorian, but six French, four Danish and six Italian citizens, including two on their honeymoon, are also among the dead.

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Shock treatment in a story for little horrors

Adrian Turpin takes a peek behind the scenes as a children's nightmare hurtles into life

IT BEGAN as a treat but spawned nightmares for generations of children. In 1844 Heinrich Hoffmann, a Frankfurt doctor who worked in a lunatic asylum, thought he would buy his three-year-old son a book for Christmas. "But what did I find?" he lamented. "Long tales, stupid stories, beginning and ending with admonitions like, 'The good child must be truthful' or 'Children must be clean'." Which is how Hoffmann came to write one of the most famous children's books ever, the collection of cautionary tales known as *Struwwelpeter*.

Hoffmann, who had a reputation for treating his mentally ill charges with unusual kindness, wrote and illustrated stories initially to calm children who saw the doctor as a bogeyman. But, reading the stories, most of which end in the violent deaths of disobedient infants, you wonder whether the doctor did more harm than good to his young patients.

The Freudian had dream that is "Little Suck-a-Thumb" graphically describes the "great, long, red-legged scissorman" punishing young Conrad: "Oh! Oh! Oh! Snip! Snip! Snip! They go so fast that both his thumbs are off at last". Augustus, who won't eat his soup, starves to death. Flying Robert's only misdemeanour is to walk out in the wind. He is blown away on an umbrella and never seen again.

When, decades later, Hilaire Belloc wrote his *Cautionary Tales*, he included the story of Matilda who cried, "Fire, fire!" so often, that when her house did catch light no one believed her. In *Struwwelpeter*, retribution tends to be swifter and more cruel. Hoffmann's Harriet plays with matches and simply burns to death. The illustrations show, first, the girl in her pinafore, huge flames shooting from her back, and, second, two cats sobbing into handkerchiefs before a pile of cinders.

These days, it's not easy to find a copy of *Struwwelpeter*, and certainly not in the children's sections of bookshops. But the theatre, it's good to see, is made of sterner stuff. Tonight, Cultural Industry's splendid stage version of Hoffmann's book comes

to the Lyric Hammersmith. *Shockheaded Peter*—subtitled "a junk opera for boys and girls"—has been almost three years in the making.

The starting point was a collection of songs based on Hoffmann's rhymes. Performed by the cult London band the Tiger Lilies, they married gypsy-like melodies with the unearthly falsetto of the singer Martyn Jacques. The original idea was to get different performers to interpret each song. When that didn't work, producer Michael Morris approached Julian Crouch and Phelim McDermott.

Two of the most innovative director-designers working in Britain, Crouch and McDermott have built a reputation for shows as emotionally satisfying as they are visually stunning, like last year's *70 Hill Lane*, a tale about a poltergeist that haunted McDermott's childhood home. They employed countless roles of Sellotape to create a house, a ghost, even at one point McDermott's grandmother. One critic described it as "*Blue Peter* meets *Blue Velvet*". Before that they had gone through a wicker period, using laundry baskets

to bind the tales together. The breakthrough came, they say, when they stopped focusing on children and started concentrating on parents. "I've got a couple of kids," Crouch says, "and I was going through a separation, so I was very interested in parenting. But we also read a book by Robert Bly, who wrote *Iron John*, called *The Sibling Society*, which is about the lost art of being parents. What he says is that nowadays we are all children bringing up children, and one way he does

it is by looking at a lot of fairy tales. It gave us something to link everything together."

Using a technique called "one word", in which a group of people assemble a story together by each writing one word at a time, they came up with the connecting narrative of *Shockheaded Peter*. "We wrote about a very wealthy couple who have everything," Crouch adds, "happiness, good looks, money and a beautiful house, but they don't have a child. So then we had them having a kind of mutant, and we ended up with this very dark story where they bury the child and hide it under the floor. And that's very exciting, because you

biggest problem was finding a struc-



Leap of imagination: Tamzin Griffin (above) in the cautionary *Shockheaded Peter* and (below right) a photo-composite of the show's cast

Photographs: Gavin Evans

know as soon as they bury it that that can't be the end." But, if *Shockheaded Peter* is about families, it's also about putting on a show, a process that directors often compare to being a parent. Crouch and McDermott have set the play inside a Victorian theatre, with cardboard cut-outs and wobbly scenery. The master of ceremonies (brilliantly played by Julian Bleach) is an actor-manager who looks like the child-catcher in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, and the spectacle he is putting on, with its monstrous child and violent punishments, is essentially a freak show.

"You have this incredible amount of pathos from this man who thinks he's the greatest actor in the world, but somehow feels that he's failed because it's not quite as good as he thought it would be," says Crouch. "I suppose a lot of the show is about being a failure but being beautiful at the same time. That's certainly true if you look at the picture of Peter from the original book. He's meant to be a monster, and the text says how filthy he is, but actually his face is angelic."

There's a lot of that in *Shockheaded Peter*. It has beautiful moments even when it's at its most horrific or ridiculous. You could say that that's the same with everything I do with Phelim and Lee. We're interested in the beauty of failure: how... it gets you to the point where you enter something more sublime." Or, as McDermott puts it: "Improvisation is an area where you've got to accept that you're going to be shit."

But, if you can deal with it, you discover new things. You go rubbish, rubbish, but the two rubbish steps are towards something new and exciting."

That is certainly how *Improbable's* other new show, *Lifegame*, seems to work. It's what they call "theatrical biography", an idea borrowed from the Canadian improv guru Keith Johnstone. Each night a guest is interviewed on stage. Scenes from their life are then improvised by performers. That may sound like a cross between *In The Psychiatrist's Chair*, *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* and *Opportunities*, but McDermott takes issue with that.

"People think it might be dangerous because it's messing with people's heads, but it's such a public arena. You want some emotion but that doesn't mean people breaking down. If you were going to abuse someone's trust, you're doing it in public and the audience could turn on you. I'd rather say it's just storytelling which is the basis of therapy anyway. That's probably why therapy exists, because in society storytelling has been lost really: it's been turned into *Cats*."

Only poor *Shockheaded Peter* had had a chance to express himself that way, he might not have grown up to be such a monster. *Shockheaded Peter* is at the Lyric Hammersmith until 9 May (0181 741 2311) then at Glasgow Tramway, *Lifegame* is at the Purcell Room, London (14-17 May), Newcastle Playhouse (10-13 June), Theatre Royal Bath (16-20 June) and Lyric Hammersmith (22-27 June).



Boogie on back to Seventies wonderland

James Rampton on a show celebrating the decade that taste forgot

THE 1970s were cool, proclaim the eager hypesters for the stage-show of *Saturday Night Fever*, which opens next month. They were all about glitz, glamour, glitter, and a white suit so sharp you could cut your finger on it. Er, not if you were from Manchester, rather than Manhattan, they weren't. In Britain, the 70s were not so much trendy as irredeemably naïf. I mean, how else can you explain The Bay City Rollers?

Boogie Nights—The Musical is Britain's antidote to *Saturday Night Fever* and all its "the 1970s were chic" propaganda. A new show unconnected to the film of the same name, *Boogie Nights* is currently touring the country in preparation for a West End run in the autumn. Jon Conway, its writer and director, is quick to emphasise that the show is very much set on this side of the Atlantic—it's the 70s of the power cut rather than the power wardrobe.

"Our catchline is: 'The 70s didn't just happen in America'," Conway says. "The biggest roar in the show is when someone rides on stage on a Raleigh Chopper. I can't see any self-respecting American musical using a Raleigh Chopper—they'd

have a Hell's Angel on a Harley Davidson. That's the difference between the two countries. We just have this tremendous sense of irony—even when something terrible happens. Dumfries was our finest hour, after all."

He goes on to explain why the 1970s—at least for the British—remains the decade that taste forgot. "The great 70s icons were football terraces and hooliganism, *On the Buses*, crap cars whose fanbelts always used to break, scratched records which hissed just before they started, and lino. Also, everyone used to make lists all the time. Nick Hornby's book, *High Fidelity*, got that exactly right. You'd make a list of the best five girls you'd ever kissed. Today, that would be too uncool—and you wouldn't talk about it unless you were selling it to the *News of the World*."

With the success of films like *Boogie Nights* and *The Ice Storm* and the return of such period TV classics as *The Sweeney*, *The Professionals*, and *The Wombles*, 1970s nostalgia is suddenly big box-office. Retro-chic equals mega-cheques. Just



Nostalgia trip: 'The 1970s are all about escapism'

look at all those "homage" adverts to 70s cop shows. Producing a feel-good musical stuffed with hits from the period—"Boogie Wonderland," "I Will Survive," "Sugar Baby Love," "YMCA," "Celebration," and "Play That Funky Music"—Conway is tapping into that mania for all things 70s. "When you reflect on the 1970s they were actually quite

ugly, but we look back on them through rose-tinted spectacles. There were tower blocks and the three-day week, but now all those things almost seem comforting—nostalgia always does that. We've forgotten the Winter of Discontent and corpses not being buried and just remember guys in lurch jumpsuits like Marc Bolan and Sweet. The 1970s are all about escapism. We all need to be able to escape into fantasy."

He claims that people also had more fun in the 70s—the only have to look at the clothes to realise they had a lively sense of humour. Conway rationalises the flapping flares and pavement-sized lapels thus: "They say a good guide to the economy is the width of people's lapels. After the Second World War, in a time of austerity, they were very thin. Then after the 'white heat of technology' in the 60s and into the 70s, they got much wider. That's my highly thought-out guide to the country's prosperity."

People were more exuberant, too, Conway reckons (although the nostalgia factor

could again be playing tricks with the memory). "Look at *Are You Being Served?* In the 70s, all the sitcom characters were larger than life. Now they're all right-on and PC. The 70s had great characters—not only in sitcoms, but in life itself. Take footballers. Now they're all so correct, but in the 70s there were players like Stan Bowles. He'd get pissed before the match and trip up over his shoelaces, but he was still a terrific hero."

A cheery happy with a very down-to-earth view of theatre, Conway has no pretensions about *Boogie Nights*. He is aware that the show is never going to win Olivier Awards for sophistication. "If you don't want to laugh, you shouldn't come to the party. The arty critics will come to *Boogie Nights* and say, 'but is it art?' The answer is, 'no, it's entertainment', and entertainment and art aren't always the same thing. We have some salient things to say, but we never let that get in the way of people having a good time."

"*Boogie Nights—The Musical* is at the Theatre Royal, Norwich (01603 622 777) and then touring nationally."

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The bride wore a dress to impress

The average price of a wedding dress last year was £689. On top of that, the headdress, veil, shoes and accessories came to £284, making a grand total of £973 for the wedding outfit alone. Getting hitched is an expensive business. However, the amount you spend on your wedding dress does not determine how

fabulous you look on the day. A dress can fulfil your dreams whether you pay £200, or the equivalent of a healthy deposit for a house. Tamsin Blanchard chooses between three price ranges: the vintage, the traditional and the outrageously expensive fantasy made to fit both you and your dreams.



Holly Wood, £200

Holly Wood, (yes, Holly's husband's name is Steve Wood), 23, was married last Saturday in a vintage Sixties cocktail dress from Steinberg & Tolkein on the King's Road, London. Her cream-satin, glass-beaded dress cost £190. She added a pair of second-hand Pied à Terre shoes from Greenwich market, a bargain at £5.

"I KNEW I wanted an old dress and had a list of shops to work through, including Coraucopia and Alfie's Market. The problem with old dresses is they are usually in really bad condition. When I went to Steinberg & Tolkein, however, one dress really stood out. It was cream satin with a glass-beaded bodice, slim fitting and to the ankle - a bit Audrey Hepburn as Holly Golightly in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*."

"The thing about wearing a second-hand dress is you know that someone else has loved it and that makes you love it too. The dress wasn't specifically a wedding dress but reminded me of last summer's Prada collection. It makes me feel like a chandelier because the beads are very swirly. I feel as though I should have a cigarette holder when I wear it. I wanted something sexy but I didn't want to show off my cleavage - it's just not right for a church."

"I was told I could get the dress dry-cleaned, but I went to four dry-cleaners and no one would take the responsibility. One place quoted me £100 but still wouldn't do it. They thought the beads would melt. In the end, my mum handwashed it which took away some of the stiffness and sheen of the satin. I starched it and that's given it a new sheen. After the wash, the fabric around the hem literally dissolved so I had to shorten it and decided on just below the knee. It's quite a cocktail hour" so it was perfect for the informal reception after the ceremony. There are a lot of different occasions you have to go through all in one day: the formal church wedding which is a sober affair; the wedding pictures; the meal - we served fish and chips and trifle - and then the party."

"I can only wear this dress once because it's old and frail. To make it fit - women were different shapes then than they are now - I had the armholes lowered, the bust taken out, and the hips taken in. In the Fifties, you would have worn a corset. I bought a fantastic bra from Rigby & Peller. It cost £35 but was well worth it for a slight Fifties pointy look."

"My shoes were £5 from Greenwich market. They are pale grey suede with a diamante strap. I was prepared to spend £300 on a pair of shoes but I just couldn't find anything I wanted. I was after kitten heels with a closed toe because I didn't know if it was going to snow, hail or shine. The second-hand Pied à Terre find was just perfect. It was quite an eclectic look."



Helen Vasiliou, £2,000

Helen's dress cost £1,700, but came to around £2,000 with alterations. She shopped around at Liberty and Neil Cunningham but finally found the perfect dress from Caroline Castiglione in Berners Street, London. It was by David Fielden. Helen was married at All Saint's church in Camden Town, north London, three weeks ago.

"£2,000 was well over what I wanted to spend. And I wasn't going to go for a full dress. I'm 4ft 11in and wanted something simple. I tried on a lot of dresses but kept going back to the David Fielden. It had a tightly fitted, boned bodice in Mercado silk with a multi-layered tulle underskirt and a short train. It had a very flat bow on the waist in front. It was very Sixties. I was a bit disappointed with the finishing. The tulle underskirt wasn't properly attached to the bodice so my mum had to make it secure."

For £2,000 I thought it would be perfect. It was very well fitted though and was really comfortable. I didn't have to pull it up once."

"When I walked down the aisle, I just looked straight ahead at my fiancé to see his reaction. You feel like a queen. A friend said I looked like the cat that got the cream. I'll have it cleaned and vacuum packed and it'll go in the loft. It's a lot of money and it'll never be worn again which was a shame. I don't think any dress justifies that money. But I felt lovely and very special."



Basia Zarzycka, £20,000

Basia Zarzycka runs a couture wedding gown business from her shop on the King's Road in Chelsea, London. She includes a pair of hand-made shoes, bag, jewellery, veil and tiara in the package and prices start at £4,500 and go up to £25,000. Her dresses are the stuff of dreams and fantasies, the ultimate fairytale wedding experience. Basia has a six-month waiting list, employs 26 staff and can only work on between 20 and 30 dresses at a time.

"We make the dress from beginning to end. The dress grows with the client. When the bride comes to us they could be royalty, or Jill Smith from down the road, but they all have one thing in common: they have a dream, a fairytale fantasy that they want brought to life."

"We have 600 tiaras to choose from. We do the whole outfit from top to toe, all included in the price. The shoes are made with a beechwood heel and we make a toile for the shoe as well as the dress so everything fits like a second skin. We use the finest chantilly lace, and the best specialist fabrics. A dress usually takes around four fittings to perfect, but the bride won't see the actual fabric until the second fitting. Corsets are our speciality. We use up to 21 panels per corset and we love hand beading. Our dresses are inspired by the eighteenth century and are very elaborate and baroque. We do modern corsets as well. The dress in the sketch is made of old white grand duchess satin from Bucoli in Paris, embellished with chantilly lace and hand-tooled Victorian roses in gold. The corset has 21 segments and is decorated with seed pearls, Austrian crystals and antique sequins. There is also a matching bag and chantilly lace shoes, a tiara and a Cathedral-length lace veil which is 3 metres long."

As wedding venues get more unusual - castles and stately homes - women are moving back to a fantasy, ethereal look. They want their dress to be as splendid as possible. We really hold their hand - bring out their personality."

I don't know what happens to the dresses after the marriage is over. I have never seen one go on the market for sale. I've heard that some of the clients have glass display cabinets made for the dress and glass domes made for their shoes."

We don't always do white dresses. We listen to the client's vision and fantasy and put it into reality."

I haven't been married yet, but I have my own fantasy. It's a secret until a year before my marriage. I won't make my own dress - it's bad luck."

OUT OF THE CLOSET

Diana Laurie,
jewellery designer
and founder of
Wild Jewels for
Brazen
Bodies reveals her
eclectic wardrobe
secrets

"I AM one of those jewellery designers who doesn't wear a lot of jewellery, and when I do, I prefer to wear just one stunning thing. I think that is why my tiaras are so popular because they are full of sparkle."

"I love beautiful clothes, and I am a particular fan of Christa Davis, she has a fantastic studio in Portobello. We are almost twins in our sense of colour, she has these wonderful rails of clothes in beautiful colours, they



remind me of my favourite painter, Mark Rothko. I bought a gorgeous full-length fuchsia and orange dress from her, cut on the bias, with little straps. I generally layer it with a lilac chiffon overdress, which has little silver sequins. It is a slightly gypsy-like look, but it's also very glamorous. "I am also a huge Vivienne Westwood fan. I have a beautiful silk jersey sleeveless top by her... it's very 1940s, which is one of my favourite eras."

"There are so many things that I could never get rid of. I still have the dress I made myself for my 20th birthday bash. It is a gold satin number, based on the dress that Marilyn Monroe wore to the premiere of *Let's Make Love*, with a bow on the bum... I also have a really fabulous Kitty Pears bag, a little silver rucksack, with silver wings on. I truly love it, it makes me feel like an angel."

Kate Lloyd

HOT THING

Fashion photographers who do weddings



WEDDING photographs can be so boring. "There's me and him - there's me and mum, there's me and the bridesmaid." Stop. What about hiring top catwalk photographers who work for *Marie Claire*, *Vogue*, or *IT*?

It is possible. Sean Cunningham (he does the catwalks of Milan, New York, Paris and London for *Vogue*) and Mitchell Sams (*Marie Claire*) have been photographing weddings as a team for three years. What they bring to the day in contrast to a traditional wedding photographer is a dogged determination to capture every possible moment, both in reportage and traditional style, from two hours before the wedding, until the bride and groom leave on their honeymoon.

This is come hell or high water, the same tactic employed at the catwalk shows. "It's the ability to get great pictures really quickly with-

out upsetting anybody," says Cunningham who has encouraged an entire family into an ancient tree for one shot, and even stripped down to waders and swimming trunks to snap another family standing on a rope bridge over the river Wye. "It is a service particularly appreciated by people who like good pictures," he adds.

The results are certainly unique, as the photographers - who work together to guarantee maximum coverage - respond to every possible event around them, and that means everything. At the end of the average wedding they have about 1000 pictures choose from. It isn't cheap, costing from £1,500 in fees, film and processing, but each picture will eventually be worth its weight in gold.

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Melanie Rickey

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Sculptors sock it to the masses

Towns and companies are waking up to the value of public works of art, but, as Vanessa Thorpe reports, not everyone likes the idea

"BUT I THOUGHT this was going to be nice," said a citizen of Loughborough, Leicestershire, once the statue of a naked man wearing nothing but a sock and a strategically placed sycamore leaf was unveiled.

"I suppose I do quite like it," another bystander admitted.

For the sculptor, Shona Kinloch, standing nearby, this kind of response to her work was in happy contrast to the criticism voiced earlier in the month, before it had even been seen. In the circumstances, an element of bathos at the municipal viewing was positively welcome.

The contentious £23,000 statue called *The Sock*, now stands in Loughborough's pedestrianised town centre and takes the form of a burly man, with indeterminate features who is proudly poking out his be-socked foot for general inspection. The woolly sock, you should note, is not just any piece of clothing: this is a town with historical links with hosiery. The leaf's important, too.

"Well, he is in public, isn't he? If the work had been for a gallery I probably wouldn't have bothered with the leaf," explains Kinloch. "So you see, I was pandering to public taste a little."

Kinloch is one of a growing band of sculptors now regularly commissioned to create focal points for town centres or business headquarters, as Britain, borne on a tide of lottery cash, bravado, at last regains its sense of artistic purpose. Up and down the country, councils, corporations and private businesses are starting to see public works of art as the right way to raise their profile.

Yet both Kinloch and her fellow artist Anthony Gormley, creator of Gateshead's *Angel of the North*, have discovered that this renaissance is a mixed blessing. Not for either artist the fond

smiles and affection lavished on David Wynne, the animal sculptor who created the beloved *Boy and Dolphin* statue on London's Chelsea Embankment. Kinloch's *The Sock* has, like the *Angel of the North*, provoked a local row about the misuse of public money.

"People said the money should have been spent on home-helps," says Kinloch, who spent six months working on *The Sock*. "There is nothing I can do about home-helps. If someone in Government would sort that out, my life would be a lot easier."

A reliance on state funding is not the only way in which a public artist is vulnerable, though. Statues attract controversy and are often targeted by vandals. In the 1980s, a bulky bust of Nelson Mandela had to be removed from London's South Bank for some months after it was attacked. And earlier this month the sculptor Nathan David was deeply upset by gratuitous damage done to his bronze figure of Margot Fonteyn. The ballerina's statue, which stood near the site of her Surrey birthplace, was pushed over and all the internal rods were snapped.

For other public pieces, like Dublin's infamous *Floozie in the Jacuzzi*, there is only the ignominy of widespread ridicule.

It is easy to see why young sculptors might shy away from designing for public spaces. The dealers' gallery is much more suited to displaying installations and video walls. And there is certainly more artistic freedom that way.

"When you work with a local authority, they often want you to involve the history of the area," comments Kinloch. "Or else they want you to involve students. Both of these can be impractical and difficult."

But the organisations that support public commissioning in this country are determined that artists like Kinloch should not



Kinloch's *The Sock*: the leaf reflect public taste, the hosiery reflects history Photograph: Brian Harris

lose heart. "There is a dangerous drive by students away from public art at the moment," warns Colin Tweedy, chief executive of the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts (ABSA). "All this video work can become too personal, I think. Art schools are moving away from reality."

Instead, Tweedy believes, Britain should concentrate on emerging from an era in which public art was "notoriously" neglected.

"We used to be quite good once, although it was always statues of generals or Queen Victoria," he says. "It is still not considered very British. Even with the *Angel of the North* there was a lot of criticism, whereas the Italians, for example, would just think it was good for the area. In Britain the reaction is to think 'we will be a laughing stock'."

Tweedy suggests a genuine growth of interest in public art has been partly inspired by the Millennium cash. The ABSA, he says, is working with the Government to promote the idea that businesses should stop simply sponsoring opera and other one-off events.

"Public sculpture is permanent, and what's more, a mural on the side of a city underpass will help to prevent graffiti. A lot of local authorities are seeing that - Birmingham, for example, with its Millennium Square."

Sandra Percival, director of the Public Arts Development Trust, sees no need for any artist to change their style of work to have a public airing. On 23 May her trust is to launch an adventurous project called "Arts TransPennine" that will involve both conventional and avant-garde works and venues across the north of England.

tions and will be seen by two-and-a-half million people a year."

Unexpectedly, the British Airports Authority has discovered an added value to this scheme - travellers' complaints about the length of walking time inside the terminal have dropped markedly.

In fact, the airports authority turns out to be one of Britain's keenest public art sponsors (its biggest popular success is probably Will Pye's striking metal cone at the centre of the spiral walkway at Gatwick).

Says Percival: "The BAA is very good, probably because one of its directors was once chairman of the Public Arts Development Trust. But there is a genuine interest and movement towards public art throughout all business sectors."

The method by which businesses should be induced to pay for art is not so easy to agree on. Tweedy sees value in the "Per cent for Art" system favoured abroad. This means that planning permission is granted with the proviso that, say, one per cent of building costs are spent on a public commission.

There would also be merit, he believes, in a structure of tax break incentives.

"We ourselves operate a matching grant scheme which can double the money a business gives," he explains. It has run since 1984 and it's called the Pairing Scheme. It allows us to give out up to £5m of Government money a year."

Sandra Percival is less sanguine about the worth of incentive schemes. "I don't think the best way is through mandating," she argues.

"It doesn't ensure adequate funding and it doesn't ensure an adequate work of art."

Formulas, she contends, are just as inimical to good art commissioning as they are to the creation of good art.

Leading article, page 16

A problem with tolerance

There's an alternative to a red-light area, but few dare discuss it, says Ann Treneman

VERONICA SEXTON has a problem and says she's not going to shut up about it until something is done. The problem can be seen every day from her beautiful bay window that looks on to one of Cardiff's leafier streets. There, against a backdrop of large Victorian family houses, the sex industry (or what passes for it here) is at work. Prostitutes, pimps and, lately, boys too. "The streets are littered with the physical evidence - condoms, needles - and they are quite openly doing business," says Mrs Sexton.

Julie has a problem too. She is 32, has six kids and hasn't been out on this street that is not so far away from Mrs Sexton's bay window since Christmas. But she needs some money. She understands why residents are angry. "You can't blame them. If I lived in this area I wouldn't like it. I wouldn't want it for my kids."

So what's the answer then? Julie shrugs. Business calls. This is the only place she can make decent money.

So Cardiff has a problem. Mrs Sexton and her neighbours are not going to go away and neither are the Julies. What to do? There were reports that a specially formed working party had put forward the idea of creating a Dutch-style tolerance zone, where prostitution and kerb-crawling would be allowed. If it happens, it would be a first. The idea is being linked to next year's rugby World Cup when Cardiff will be bursting with men who may want something more than sport.

The idea may sound rather sensible, but the reality is anything but. The working party itself is a bit of a secret and would prefer to stay that way. Tolerance zone? Where had I heard that? Was I aware that absolutely nothing had been decided? The police aren't sure about the extent of the problem. Cardiff County Council sees it as too hot to handle. "Why would anyone want to get involved with that?" they whisper.

Councillor Lynda Thorne has an answer. Her phone rings a lot. Her constituents are frightened to walk home in case a car cruises by and they hear a voice saying: "Doing business, love?" They do not like their children to play outside. Mrs Thorne called a public meeting. "I invited the police. They weren't very happy but I said that really this was a police issue, and not a council issue. Then I spoke to one of the police who was prepared to set up this working group."

This was 18 months ago. The group, which, curiously, seems

is where it is going to be, and they don't want it in their ward so they'd rather the whole thing went away."

If you call Cardiff's Central police station, they deny there is a proposal for such a zone. But, a few miles away at Fairwater nick, they say there is such a proposal and invite me to go on patrol. I arrive on a wickedly cold night. Who would be out in such rain? The police think no one. Then the radio crackles with the news that a prostitute named Michelle has been arrested. She has failed to turn up for court appearances 18

side and the river on the other. At one end is a low brick wall that the girls, some as young as 14, sit on. It is thought that the bay women will be coming to the embankments soon.

The Taffs Mead area is particularly nice. This is where Veronica Sexton lives and where she raised her children. And this is where, even early on a rainy Friday night, there is no shortage of women looking for business and cars cruising by to provide it. A sad woman named Bel said she's lost track of her arrests. She likes working in a residential area because it makes her feel safer. Della, wearing a red PVC skirt, said she might give the zone a try, adding: "I wouldn't like this going on in front of my house."

These women are Jill Cokes' clients. She works for the health authority as an outreach worker for prostitutes. Her card introduces her as "The Rubber Woman". She sits on the tolerance zone committee and describes herself as a realist: "Street prostitution will always exist. Unless you can actually modify men, then you are always going to have it."

The key, she says, is to make it as safe as possible. "It's not an easy thing to do, to change, and expectations for this zone shouldn't be too high. Punters may be frightened to start with and some women may think 'Why should I be told where to work?' But, if at the end of an agreed time, it isn't working, then we could stop it. Nothing is written in tablets of stone."

She is the only one who seems hopeful. Mrs Thorne believes the media attention has killed the proposal. The police say they cannot be tolerant because soliciting is against the law. The residents - who are split on the idea of a zone - say the police aren't that great. The girls blame life in general for pretty much everything. All these words and still, when Mrs Sexton looks out her front window, she doesn't like what she sees. It's a problem.



A prostitute in Cardiff: The city's problem is they won't go away, but where can they go? Photograph: Christopher Jones

to have no official status, is made up of health authority workers, Mrs Thorne, residents and police. A council official is helping to put together a report, apparently because the police couldn't provide anyone. Mrs Thorne repeats that she is not representing the council. It is all very sensitive, she says.

Take what happened when the tolerance zone idea hit the local headlines. Everyone started to speculate about the site for a zone and Mrs Thorne asked if she could look into this for the council. "They said 'You're not going to put it in my ward!'" That's what happens. The minute you raise it up, people are not interested in the principle. All they are interested in

times. Perhaps she has views on a tolerance zone. But Michelle's views only come in four-letter words and centre around spending the night in the cells.

If there was a tolerance zone here, the night would have been very different. For starters, Michelle wouldn't be in the cells because she wouldn't have been arrested in the first place. Our tour would have been boring because such zones are in industrial areas and sound rather sterile.

Cardiff still feels unsafe in its red-light areas. One is in the bay redevelopment area and won't be around for much longer. The other two - Taffs Mead Embankment and Flitzhamon Embankment - have houses on one

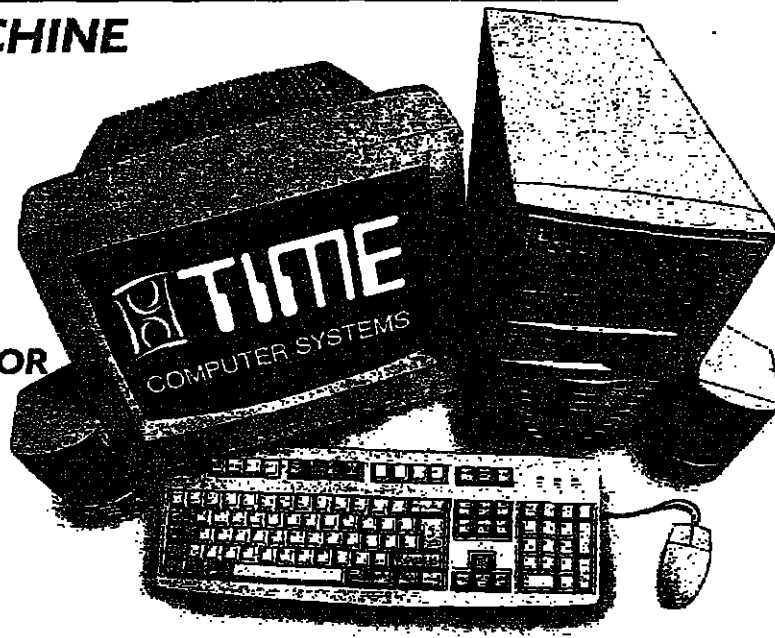
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DEPUTY EDITOR: CHRIS BLACKHURST
ADDRESS: 1 CANADA SQUARE, CANARY WHARF LONDON E14 5DL
TELEPHONE: 0171 293 2000 OR 0171 345 2000
FAX: 0171 293 2435 OR 0171 345 2435
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Blair's snake-oil democracy

WHAT DO MPs do all day? It's an unfair question, of course, because most of them work very hard – albeit on tasks which would make a strange definition of "work" for most of their constituents: sympathising, speechifying, looking serious, politicking.

But is it unfair for the Labour Party to dictate to its 417 MPs the terms and conditions of their employment? As we report today, the party is working on "contracts" which would set out what MPs are expected to do in terms of talking to and visiting their voters in return for support from party HQ. Above all, it would seem, Labour MPs are to be required to engage in a programme of "voter contact" which should see them on the doorsteps of their constituency for two hours every weekend and every day for two weeks when Parliament is not sitting in the summer. On the knocker or the phone, Labour MPs are expected to contact 100 new households on their patch every week. The maths of the petty dictators of Millbank Tower are impeccable: over the five-year maximum period between elections, that would amount to 26,000 households. Their politics, though, are faulty. MPs are, after all, employed by the people themselves, not by the people's party.

Of course, it is no use arguing that this is not what parliamentarians are used to. Everything, in the New Labour dawn, has to be justified afresh from first principles. Even so, the bossy management-school jargon emanating from Millbank has infuriated many Labour MPs – especially those elected before 1997, or those elected unexpectedly in seats which were not even on the party's target list. The more pompous among them mutter about parliamentary privilege. The older ones recall Tony Benn's attempted "loyalty pledge" in 1980, intended to commit every MP and candidate to every dot and comma of the National Executive's entire programme.

Both have a point, although we are not overly impressed. It is not a bad idea to set out more clearly what is expected of MPs. If we believe what we read in the papers, new MPs are suffering stress and anxiety simply because they do not know what their role is. Academic literature is full of learned articles on the growing volume of correspondence, the declining effectiveness of surgery work, the professionalisation of politics – all of which raises the question: what does democratic representation mean today?

Peter Mandelson, the Prime Minister's "minister for looking ahead", thought aloud interestingly about this at a seminar at the British embassy in Bonn last month. "It may be that the era of pure representative democracy is slowly coming to an end," he said. By implication he accused the western European elites of being out of touch with their electorates, especially on the question of European integration, and suggested they should rely more on opinion polls, focus groups and referendums – as New Labour had done.

This got up the noses of the Germans, but was of a piece with Tony Blair's pamphlet *Leading the Way* also published last month, which set out an ambitious programme of reform for local government, organised around the idea that local politicians should show "leadership" by opinion poll, local referendum and citizens' juries.

This is a strange notion of leadership, and points to a fundamental flaw at the heart of the New Labour idea of democracy. Mr Blair and Mr Mandelson are right that the old mechanisms are worn out, but there is an alarming tendency on their part to confuse democracy with marketing. We have seen it in the slow hollowing-out of Mr Blair's rhetoric, circa 1993-94, about a vibrant Labour Party, a democratic part of its local communities. Contrast that with the disappointing centralism of the system of closed party lists which has become Labour's default form of proportional representation – for the European Parliament, Scotland, Wales and London. It is quite extraordinary that the Conservative Party will have a more democratic system than Labour of choosing its MEPs next year. The Tories will decide the all-important ranking of candidates on the ballot paper by one member, one vote ballot: Labour will fix it in caucuses of regional delegates and officials.

In this light, it seems as if Labour MPs are being recruited to a vast exercise in the selling of Mr Blair's snake-oil (not to mention being kept busy to be better kept out of mischief). "Voter contact" does not sound like a genuine exercise in participatory democracy, more like highly structured and efficient soft soap.

We have too many MPs and they cannot all declaim majestically, with electric flashes of Wildean wit, of course, on the Great Issues of the Day all day and every day. Their pastoral role is important, but it must be a two-way contract between the people and their representatives.

What the people want from public art

"THERE IS nothing I can do about home helps. If someone in government would sort that out, my life would be a lot easier." Ah, the dilemmas of the modern artist. On page 15, Shona Kinloch tries to deflect criticism of her statue *The Seck in Loughborough*. Some of the locals would rather have spent the £23,000 on getting meals on wheels to pensioners. Well, there will always be other ways of spending money than on art, even if "someone in government" ensured that everyone got the best home-help service possible. Ms Kinloch's life is not supposed to be easy: what is interesting is that she is one of a new wave of mostly rather folksy statutory paid for from the vast mountain of lottery money. Her figure in Loughborough, historic centre of hosiery (hence the footwear), contrasts with the abstract metal shapes that invite incomprehension and graffiti. The only way to deal with the home-help argument, in fact, is to make the sort of art people want. Even if it does mean that her male figure boasts a strategically placed sycamore leaf.



Sanctions on Iraq

ANDREW MARR (Comment, 21 April) sets out the case for abandoning sanctions against Iraq as a "cruel and utterly pointless" policy.

People often assume that sanctions are designed to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Not so. They are linked to the demands made by the Security Council after his invasion of Kuwait. These range from dismantling Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and Iraq's capability to rebuild them, to paying compensation to the victims of the invasion, to accounting for the over 600 missing Kuwaitis. Iraq could have complied in months. Instead, Saddam Hussein has defied the international community for over seven years.

The results for the Iraqi people have been truly terrible. But whose fault is this? Since 1991 we and other members of the Security Council have pushed to put in place arrangements which would allow food, medicines and other humanitarian assistance to flow freely to the Iraqi people. Saddam Hussein refused to allow this to happen until 1996. Even now, Iraqi co-operation is less than wholehearted.

There is a genuine dilemma about how to help the people of a country where the regime is intent not on relieving their suffering but on using the misery of its citizens as a political bargaining tool. It is a dilemma which has been addressed at the Humanitarian Meeting in London this week. There are no easy answers. But we and other concerned governments are determined to ensure that the Iraqi people receive the humanitarian assistance they need. Sanctions can be lifted – when Iraq finally complies with the Security Council's demands. Meanwhile, they are forcing Saddam to give up his horrifying arsenal of weapons of mass destruction and making him less of a threat to his neighbours and to his own people.

The premature lifting of sanctions, without Iraqi compliance with its international obligations would be short-sighted and highly destabilising for a region where Britain and the EU have vital interests. It is a battle of wills: the will of the international community to hold Saddam Hussein to less

his promises versus the will of a ruthless dictator. The outcome has implications which go far beyond Iraq.

DEREK FATCHETT
Minister of State
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London SW1

FOR the Kuwaiti embassy to send a cheque for £5000 to *The Independent's* Iraq appeal and to claim that "the international community as a whole has shown great concern for the Iraqi people" is cynical in the extreme (letter, 18 April).

Under "oil-for-food" (Security Council Resolution 986), 30 per cent of the money raised through the sale of Iraqi oil goes to the oil-rich emirate. A further 10 per cent pays for UN monitoring. Thus at least 40 per cent of the (in itself wholly inadequate) \$2 bn worth of oil that Iraq is permitted to sell every six months is being deliberately diverted away from providing humanitarian aid for the Iraqi people.

No country could reasonably be expected to surrender its principal national resource to an international body dominated by a power (the US) overtly and covertly committed to the overthrow of that country's government.

GABRIEL CARLYLE
Junior Research Fellow
Magdalen College, Oxford

RICHARD BUTLER, heading the UN Weapons Inspectorate, is quoted as saying that Iraq has failed to give a "full and complete" statement regarding bio-weapons programmes – "They blew it" – again raising the possibility of a strike against Iraq (Andrew Marr, 21 April).

The list of sites visited by the numerous teams of experts since 1991 runs to thousands and frequently to far. In June 1997 a special team was flown from Washington to inspect a Catholic convent. The simplicity of the lives of the nuns is reflected in their

LETTERS

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burial place. There are no inscriptions or headstones, just large square blocks of stone laid like a chess board, with a simple iron handle in the centre of each, with which to manoeuvre them into place. The inspectors probed the site extensively – after searching the nuns' bedrooms and even the convent roof. From a spy plane or satellite monitor, the site would look similar to a missile silo – except that the blocks are far too small.

I was in Iraq in December 1997 when Scott Ritter's fearless lads raided a creche – and in February when they searched an orphanage. When they went to the science department at Baghdad University, it was in such a pathetic state after seven years of sanctions, they laughed. And then threw out most of the few remaining books. Quis custodiet ipsos custodes? FELICITY ARBUTHNOT
London E9

Policing charities

AS HEAD of the statutory body charged by Parliament with oversight of the charitable sector I must correct what your report "Charities to be policed by new watchdog" (16 April) says about the Charity Commission's role and powers.

Our aim is to maintain public confidence in the integrity of charities and our powers to do this go far beyond "registering charities and receiving and checking their accounts". New powers effectively starting to operate this year are enabling us to increase the active supervision of registered charities in England and Wales.

The monitoring requirement, under which all registered charities with an income of over £10,000 a year must send us a report and accounts annually, is in its first cycle and going well. Contrary to your report this is an active process. We pursue issues of administration, financial control and legal integrity. We encourage good practice and seek to

prevent problems. However, where problems do arise, and in particular where there is deliberate abuse, we have – and use – very substantial powers to put things right.

The Charity Commission is not complacent, but I do not believe that there is evidence of falling public confidence in charities. The exceptional problems – which attract disproportionate public attention – and which we use our powers to remedy – do not justify undermining that confidence. The sector is not complacent either. There is an important national initiative, sponsored by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, to study ways in which standards of good practice may best be encouraged. We are co-operating closely with this initiative.

R J FRIES
Chief Charity Commissioner
Charity Commission
London SW1

Taken ill in America

NO ONE familiar with the American health system ("US hospital refused to help British girl who broke her arm", 20 April) would be at all surprised that a child could be denied hospital treatment without a cash deposit. American friends of mine took their niece to hospital in California with a badly broken arm and were refused entry because their medical insurance was not with the company owning the hospital. They were directed to a different hospital, 40 miles away through the mountains.

What is surprising about this incident, however, is that British tourists, accustomed to the National Health Service, continue to travel without insurance to countries with very expensive health care and apparently expect to receive treatment free of charge.

SUE KINDER
London N1

Techno-terror

SO "The Independent" is totally dependent on computers (leading article, 17 April). Silly me – I thought it was written and produced by human beings. Your leader really is an insult to those of us who are terrified of computers, and regard them as neither indispensable nor straightforward to use. The attempts I have made to use these unfathomable machines have all ended in tears. Now I can even be excluded from studying for another degree, solely because I cannot participate in electronic wizardry. Some people even consider me, and the Prime Minister for that matter, to be thus not truly educated.

This letter is hand-written and sent via the Royal Mail – and thus presumably unfit for publication. DAVID L SEYMOUR
London SE4

A pole in the head

I WAS intrigued to see in your front page photograph on 21 April Tony Blair and Yasser Arafat as exemplars of the latest fashion in diplomatic dress code – the carrying of flagpoles on the head. And it was good to note that in the interest of suppressing nationalism the two leaders had swapped flags.

From a technical point of view, I would assume that Mr Arafat's pole is supported by a structure in his head-dress, but Mr Blair's appears to have no such apparatus – is the pole inserted directly into the skull? JULIEN EVANS
Chesham, Buckinghamshire

Where the buck stops

DONALD DEWAR has emphatically revived the long-forgotten doctrine of the buck stopping at the top, in calling for the immediate departure of the Grampian Chief Constable, Dr Ian Oliver. Will his colleague Jack Straw take the same view in regard to Commissioner Sir Paul Condon if, as seems likely, the Stephen Lawrence inquiry finds similar incompetence in a murder case by the Metropolitan Police?

BOB RODWELL
Ballyhalbert, Co Down

Cool Britannia? Forget it – and build yourself a Crisp new style



MILES KINGSTON

I DON'T want to get drawn into this Cool Britannia debate, for the very good reason that there is no debate. There is nothing to talk about. Ben Elton is right. It's a load of nonsense. There is nothing there. One might as well discuss astrology or Atlantis, or Britpop, or argue about the accuracy of the X-Files. The whole thing is non-existent.

Right, that settles that, and we could all go home now, were it not for two things. One is that I have some more space to fill and it will look very odd if I stop this article here.

The other is the worrying impression I get from all this Cool Britannia thing that people nowadays think that style and fashion are the same thing. To read many magazines for both women and men you would think that the only way to the stylish is to be in the swim... have the right accessories... wear the right things and

go to the right places... be in the "in" crowd...

Well, that is the way to be fashionable. But there is nothing stylish about it. Style and fashion are two different things. Maybe they are opposites. Quentin Crisp always thought so. He once wrote a book called *How to Have a Lifestyle* – which I would call seminal if I had ever met anyone apart from me who had read it – in which he makes the irresistible point that a person who has style is someone who has established his own identity, cultivates it and sticks to it. Style comes from being yourself as far as you possibly can, and ignoring fashion.

Style, as Crisp said, is for people who know who they are. Fashion is for people who don't know or care who they are, and are prepared to let other people tell them who they are. Take hair loss. If you are fashionable, you fight against baldness using

any weapon you can. If you are stylish and you start to go bald, you shave your hair off and make your baldness stylish. Style is the opposite of fashion. Julian Clary has style. The Spice Girls have nothing in common with style. Stephen Fry has style. Peter Stringfellow...

Once saw Quentin Crisp doing his stage show at the Mayfair Theatre, inviting questions from the audience about life, and one man got up and said: "I have tried following all your advice, Mr Crisp, but I cannot get away from the fact that I am still a boring person. What should I do?"

"Cultivate your boringness," said Crisp. "Become the most spectacularly boring person in your circle. When people throw parties they should say, 'We must invite old so-and-so – he's so rivetingly boring – no party is complete without him!'"

But the hardest thing of all, said Crisp, was to execute a complete change of style,

from one spectrum end to the other. Having established yourself as a sinner or a fool, it is not easy to become a saint or a sage. Yet it is possible. In our own times we have seen Michael Winner go from being a film director to a man who no longer makes films, but is only a ubiquitous TV and radio guest – indeed, his reputation is now so firmly established as a ubiquitous guest that he no longer needs to turn up. I myself have heard his ubiquity referred to fifty times for every once I have actually seen him.

The examples are many. Michael Palin went from being a famous young clown to being a famous middle-aged traveller. Cilla Black was once a cheeky singing teenager and has completed the transition to everyone's favourite aunt. Perhaps the most extreme change of style in recent months was that of Janet Street-Porter. For years she was thought to be a totally urban fig-

ure, a media guru with outlandish spectacles, accent and legs. Suddenly she re-emerged as the head of the Ramblers' Association, for all the world like a tall country head perfect fighting for the sanctity of wild places. It was a wonderful, perverse transition, and in her series *Coast to Coast* nobody seemed to think it odd that this long-legged, trendily-bespattered, heavily Cockney sergeant-major can now be seen striding through the byways of rural England, not always, it has to be said, paying much attention to the countryside, or saying much about it.

The oddest change of style of all is that of Andrew Lloyd-Webber, who seems to be trying to establish a new image as a restaurant critic, which might be original if Rossini hadn't been so much better a cook and a chef all those years ago...

Good heavens – is that the time? See you tomorrow!

Let children do the important homework: Taking credit for failure in China



SUZANNE MOORE
ON LABOUR'S WORK ETHIC

ANYONE with any sense realises the value of making children do homework. Unless children were made to do homework they would never learn the skills essential to working life. They would not learn how to lie, to make excuses, cheat and feign illness. "The dog ate my exercise book, sir" translates in later life into car breakdowns, nervous breakdowns or computer breakdowns that will explain why you are late again.

David Blunkett, though, has done his homework and has now come up with a set of guidelines about just how much work children should be doing in their spare time. Some of this may be helpful. Many parents are genuinely confused about how much homework their children should be doing and are always demanding more of the awful stuff. These guidelines set out amounts for various ages. From the moment they set foot in school the child should be doing ten minutes of homework a day. Now, we can call this palaver homework, and it can be set by an over-worked teacher, or we could just read them a bedtime story occasionally.

I always thought homework didn't

really start until you were at secondary school, and then only in the years when kids are being geared up to jump through various exam hoops. I am apparently wrong. Ten year olds should be getting regular homework. Mr. Blunkett said, "I am concerned that according to a National Foundation for Educational Research survey, 43 per cent of all ten year olds get no regular homework, yet over half of ten year olds spend three or more hours a night watching TV." Like so much Labour policy there is far too much concern with what people shouldn't be doing, because we know exactly what it that they should be doing: working.

This is the solution to every social problem. Work is good, no matter what kind. We must work whether we are single mothers, disabled or four years of age. Leisure is a waste of time. If children watch TV they are certainly getting the wrong idea, the idea being that they may organise their own spare time. You wouldn't want children sitting around doing nothing now, would you?

Well yes. Some one has to make the case for doing nothing. And if children aren't allowed to skive and daydream, what hope can there be for the rest of us? Most children already work all day at school and do some more in the evenings. My daughter who goes to a comprehensive in Hackney often works late into the night. She and her friends look exhausted. Do they really need to be doing this amount of homework, I ask myself.

That's fine, you might say. What about the kids who are not given homework, whose parents do not know or care if they do it? Surely Blunkett's lottery-funded, study support-centres are a good thing. Yes of course, though I suspect the average parent would prefer direct investment in education, rather than in the support structures outside of school.

As we pile the pressures upon chil-



Go on, supervise that homework Hulton Getty

dren, many of whom are exhibiting stress-related disorders, we should ask ourselves about the real value of homework. The skills that are increasingly in demand are visual, social and creative: the very skills that may develop precisely from having nothing to do. Adam Phillips, in his book *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored*, has written of the virtues of boredom for children; the mental space it provides out of which creativity may flow. Yet the relentless thrust of so much modern parenting is activity-centred, about doing rather than be-

ing. The child must be entertained or educated at all times, as though we distrust and fear what children might be were they left to their own devices.

While structured learning is back in vogue as the answer to the failures of boys within the current education system, not everyone responds to such structure. Indeed, while this government pins its hope on work as morally uplifting, it is in the world of non-work, formerly known as leisure, where the money is to be made.

The modern work-place requires people who can organise their own

Jonathan Mirsky examines Robin Cook's claims for his 'ethical foreign policy'

THE Foreign Office's Human Rights report, issued yesterday, is misguided but serious. But the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, made himself ridiculous after the report was issued by taking credit for the release of China's two most famous dissidents, Wei Jingsheng and Wang Dan.

Speaking on the BBC's *The World at One*, Mr Cook recalled that in January he was in Beijing. He had with him a list of 12 political prisoners. "Two of the people on that list, Wei Jingsheng and Wang Dan, have now been released," he said. Mr Cook is not at his best with these lists. Mr Wei was freed on 16 November. And in March, when Mr Cook showed Mr Wei another list of political prisoners, and asked him for any information about their circumstances, Mr Wei pointed out that he was at the top.

This is symptomatic of how Britain deals with Beijing on human rights. The FCO's report highlights its "new dialogue on human rights with China" emphasising that dialogue, not confrontation, gets results. The Chinese now receive a "wide-ranging package of practical assistance", including legal training and village governance. "China also participated in a seminar on human rights in Beijing with the EU," signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and "is preparing to sign" the one on Civil and Political Rights. The report mentions, too, lobbying for "individual cases" such as Wei Jingsheng's.

Individual cases are the easiest to understand. Bluntly, the UK had nothing to do with the release of Mr Wei last November, or that of Wang Dan on Sunday. Their releases were the result of deals between Washington and Beijing. The deal for Mr Wei was that he would be released in November, immediately after President Jiang received a full-scale White House welcome. The Wang release was part of the price for President Clinton visiting Beijing in June; the rest of the price was China agreeing to sign the Civil and Political Rights Covenant. The US agreed to give up sponsoring the annual UN resolution on human rights

in China - and Britain and the rest of the EU went along.

Mr Wei points out that while manoeuvres and deals in which this or that individual benefits are good for the victim - but cannot be considered rights. This was made clear in Beijing on Monday. Wang Dan's release, a spokesman emphasised, was for medical reasons only. If he returned to China he would not be a free man. This was stated as well when Mr Wei was released, also for a flight to a hospital in Detroit, now waggishly dubbed the "Northwest Airlines Non-stop to Exile."

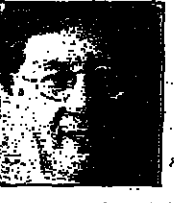
On Monday, the day after Wang Dan's release, China showed its contempt for the game by sentencing to two years in prison Wang Tinglin, a middle school teacher, charged with "disturbing social order". He had spoken with an exiled dissident, who had entered China in February, is not a criminal, and carries a Chinese passport. How is the "legal training" the FCO describes going to help school-teacher Wang? Or the handful of other dissidents arrested this month - whose names are not widely known in the West, so they will not be so valuable to the Chinese in obtaining concessions.

The judges are taking their orders from the Party which is not consulting a "wide-ranging package." Suppose Beijing signs the Covenant which includes Culture. What effect will that have on Chen Kuyuan, Party Secretary in Tibet? Last August Mr Chen described the notion that Tibetan culture is Buddhist as "absurd". Quoting Mao, he emphasised that "in inheriting a culture it is necessary to discard its dross."

What Beijing reacts to is pressure. After Tiananmen, international sanctions resulted in the release of hundreds of prisoners. The American fleet stopped invasion manoeuvres near Taiwan in March, 1996. By banning them from competition, international sporting bodies frightened China's swimmers into stopping their drug-taking.

In March, Mr Cook stood next to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright when she warned the Serbian regime to stop its murders in Kosovo. "If we don't get the kind of result we want, we need to remember that the only kind of pressure President Milosevic understands is the kind that imposes a real price on his unacceptable behaviour." Secretary Albright added words neither Britain nor the US are willing to apply to China. "Moral condemnation and symbolic gestures of concern will get us nowhere."

There is an alternative to joining the euro



HAMISH McRAE
ON LOOKING BEYOND EUROPE

WE NEED a Plan B, and we should be grateful to Newt Gingrich for suggesting one.

Plan A, of course, is Britain's membership of the EU, with all this entails and all it may entail in the future. It is conceivable that the plans for a single currency will be a success, at least for a while. It is conceivable, too, that Britain will feel adequately comfortable joining in the single currency if that is required of us at some stage in the first part of the next century as a condition of continued membership of the EU. But it is also conceivable that the euro will not be a success, or that we might not be prepared to accept the pooling of sovereignty that would result.

To say this is not to prejudge either the success of the euro or to take any particular position on Britain and the single currency. It is simply to say that any prudent organisation will always try to operate with a fall-back position. We would be mad not to do so.

This is why we should take very seriously the suggestion this week of Newt Gingrich, speaker of the US House of Representatives, that Britain should consider joining Nafta, the North American Free Trade Association. He is not the first top North American politician to suggest this: a few months ago Preston Manning, the Canadian opposition leader, proposed that Britain should be invited to join. This is not yet the official policy of the US administration, nor of the Canadian government. But there would, apparently, be a movement in both legislatures to put forward some formal invitation if Britain were indeed serious about joining.

We are not there yet - we do not need to make a decision at the moment, nor indeed could we do so, for joining Nafta would conflict with treaty obligations with the EU. But it is an option that deserves serious consideration. Indeed in many ways it is potentially a more attractive one than remaining in the EU.

To say that will seem odd to many people. Physical proximity would seem to run counter to the notion: we cannot untie Britain and drag it half-way across the Atlantic. And more than half

our visible trade is with the EU: we cannot turn our back on that.

But to focus on the links of physical proximity and visible trade is to take a curiously old-fashioned view of the world. Physical proximity matters less and less in an era of cheap air travel and cheap air freight, and the fastest-growing forms of trade are in goods and services with zero transport costs and instant delivery: trade in things like software or financial services. In the world of the Internet, distance is dead. We are moving to a world defined by cul-

ture and language rather than one defined by physical location.

Besides, though more than half our physical trade is with the EU, more than 80 per cent of our investments are outside the EU, and the largest single proportion of these are in the US. Britain has now become the second largest earner of investment income in the world after Japan. We need to protect our trade income, but we need to protect our investment income, too.

There are other reasons for suspecting that, given the choice, we might be wiser to try to tie the UK economy to North America rather than Europe. For purely demographic reasons, it will be a faster-growing region over the next 50 years. The US has just become the youngest of the Group of Seven nations, measured by the proportion of population under the age of 65: Britain becomes the second youngest around 2010; Canada is younger still, and of course Mexico is young too.

Not only will Nafta be faster-growing, it will also be larger. Much has been made of the fact that the EU group has a larger population than the Nafta one, and that its GDP is almost as big. Switch

ing. The child must be entertained or educated at all times, as though we distrust and fear what children might be were they left to their own devices.

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Newt Gingrich suggests that Britain might join the North American Free Trade Association

Lessons from South Africa for peacemakers in Northern Ireland

Nelson Mandela tells Shaun Johnson that peace can be won in Ulster by men and women who put their children's future first

comes next, as leaders who have only just convinced themselves to take the leap now have to sell the plan to the people outside. We counsel three things: fortitude, limitless patience, and (we like our sporting metaphors here) the ability to sidestep.

The similarities and the differences between our completed settlement and Northern Ireland's embryonic one have been picked over endlessly. The differences are as important as the similarities, and only the foolish stretch the parallels too far, searching for the Irish Mandela, the De Klerk, the Buthelezi. They will not be found, nor should they be - for while the grand theme of reconciliation may be universal, the nature of its achievement is not.

But now, that the point has been reached in Northern Ireland where principled agreement must give way to the process itself, some of the lessons we learned - especially the one about the sidestep - are worth revisiting.

"Take fortitude first, that noun meaning courage in endurance. The South African process required extraordinary endurance, not least because of the wild mood swings that characterised our country from the moment of 'breakthrough' (in our case the release of Nelson Mandela) - and which, tellingly, still make a reappearance from time to time. It was endurance which eventually saw to it that the implacable radicals

of the right and left - those who actually did not want the peace - were marginalised, and Mandela's broad new 'centre' cohered. It took an awful long time and all bets were off, often.

Our process took four years, more or less. It felt like a hundred then, though now it is remembered as the blink of an eye. The peoples' patience is thinner even than the politicians': at one brief point, heresy of heresies, the greatest threat to achieving a negotiated settlement seemed to be public boredom. The grand declamatory speeches are few and far between, and the between is filled with uninspiring minutiae; occasional mendacity and a rich vein of pettiness.

In South Africa it was left to the US ambassador of the time to point out that by comparison with the labours of our country's founding fathers, our negotiators were fairly bounding along. It didn't feel like that to us, but we took the point: four years in the life of a country is nothing if forever is at stake.

Which brings us to the sidestep. If one tactic, one mechanism, saw through to its conclusion the South African negotiating process, it was the ability to circumvent one problem temporarily while continuing to make progress on others. Whenever - and it was often - an issue became too intractable for progress to be made, and tempers became too frayed, the negotiators sim-

ply moved away from it for a while - in public at least.

Although we must beware stretching the parallels between the two situations, we can listen to the echoes. There was a time in South Africa when it appeared that the entire peace process would collapse over one issue: whether or not the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto weSizwe, would hand in its arms caches. We didn't use words like "decommissioning", but I think we understand them.

I remember the early hours of a winter's morning in 1990 on the Highveld, with a knot of us transition-chroniclers huddled on the steps of the Union Buildings in Pretoria, smoking cigarettes and speculating as the meeting inside went beyond its twelfth hour. The issue of the arms caches had become the greatest test of the South African negotiated settlement - the majority school of thought was that as neither side was going to budge, that was pretty much going to be it. Peace would be cancelled, war resumed.

It was not so. A rickety ceasefire was fashioned without resolving the cache question, but it was enough at the time. As the process moved far ahead on its own impetus, the caches were never mentioned again - the success of the wider negotiations rendered the issue effectively irrelevant.

The point is a simple one: if an ob-

stacle is too big to climb, just go around it. Strangely - and you will have to trust us on this - it doesn't look so big from the other side. Eventually it is a dot in the distance for a backward glance, then you can't see it any more - if you keep walking.

But don't take any of this from me. I was just lucky enough to have had a front-row seat as our country made its long, argumentative leap of faith. Listen rather to the architect of our still-miraculous transition. This week I asked President Nelson Mandela if he thought the glue, still not set at this crucial early stage, could hold in Northern Ireland as it had in South Africa.

Mandela replied: "As long as there are men and women on all sides who are able to rise above feelings for revenge, men and women who can put the future of their children first, who can put terrible episodes behind them in order to move on, this process can work as ours eventually did."

"I have great respect for all the leaders in the Northern Ireland negotiations, and I hope that their supporters on all sides will be persuaded that this peace must be achieved."

"It will take a long time. There will be many disappointments. But it can be done if the will is unshakable."

Shaun Johnson is editorial director of *The Independent Newspapers in South Africa*.

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FINANCIAL JOURNAL OF THE YEAR

GEC pays £800m for US defence firm

By Michael Harrison

GEC yesterday unveiled its first big takeover deal since Lord Simpson took charge of the group 18 months ago, by agreeing to pay £800m for an American defence electronics group.

The acquisition of Tracor, one of the leading contractors to the Pentagon, will turn GEC into the sixth-biggest US defence electronics company with sales of \$1.3bn and 25,000 employees.

Announcing the surprise deal yesterday, Lord Simpson made it clear that GEC's US

ambitions did not end with Tracor and that it remained interested in other American defence contractors, including parts of Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman.

John Mayo, GEC's finance director, told analysts in London: "This adds lustre to our cluster, and further enhances the attractiveness of GEC to other potential partners."

The US deal follows the agreement last month between GEC-Marconi and Finmeccanica of Italy to merge their respective defence electronics businesses. Lord Simpson rejected suggestions that the transatlantic tie-up might damage GEC's prospects of taking part in a wider consol-

idation of the European defence industry. "It may actually accelerate the process rather than retard it," he told analysts.

GEC has been targeting the US for a strategic defence strike for over a year but the choice of Tracor came as a surprise. The group, which has sales of \$1.3bn and made operating profits last year of \$102m, specialises in information systems, electronic warfare and naval military systems. It was recently selected to provide mission software for the US Department of Defense's bomber tanker and cruise missile force, last seen in action in the war with Iraq.

Lord Simpson said the acquisition would prove a perfect fit with GEC's own Marconi division since there were few areas where the two businesses overlapped.

He also said he was confident of gaining approval from US anti-trust and defence authorities, even though Tracor is involved in a large number of top-secret "black" Pentagon programmes and has 1,700 security-cleared staff.

The deal will be financed from cash and credit facilities. In February, GEC raised £3.9bn through a revolving credit facility, the first to be denominated in euros. It also has £1.2bn of net cash in the group and expects to raise a further £1bn when it floats 20 per

cent of its stake in GEC-Alsthom, the power and transportation joint venture, this June.

Mr Mayo told analysts that GEC expected to earn a 15 per cent return after tax on Tracor and grow its revenues by 10 to 15 per cent a year. GEC also expects to generate \$55m of cost savings in its first full year of ownership by incorporating Tracor into its existing US defence electronics operations.

He added that the deal had elevated GEC into the first transatlantic defence electronics group. Discussions between the two groups had been going on for several months but there had been no leaks. Analysts had suggested the two US de-

fence businesses GEC was eyeing up were Litton Industries and JTT Industries, valued at \$2.8bn and \$4bn respectively. But rising US stock markets have made both expensive takeover propositions. In addition, Litton has an extensive warship building business while JTT has a big automotive division, which GEC is not interested in.

GEC is paying \$40 a share for Tracor and has the unanimous backing of the company's board. Including assumption of debt the total purchase price is \$1.4bn. GEC expects to complete the deal with all necessary regulatory approvals by June.

What Shell said about itself, and why it is pulling out of an international lobbying group



By Michael Harrison

ROYAL DUTCH SHELL has pulled out of a powerful industry group lobbying against tougher environmental controls in what signals a growing split between European and US energy companies over their approach to climate change.

Mark Moody-Stuart, chairman of the group's UK arm Shell Transport and Trading, disclosed yesterday that it had withdrawn from the Global Climate Coalition last week after concluding that its differences with the group were "irreconcilable".

The Washington-based GCC represents 230,000 firms and is dominated by the likes of the US oil giant Exxon, the car makers General Motors and Ford and big American power producers and energy intensive industries.

The organisation opposes the agreement reached at the Kyoto summit last December for a 5.2 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2012.

BP left the group last year after allowing its \$5,000 annual membership to lapse. Now Shell has followed suit after being repeatedly attacked in Europe for its continued membership.

Mr Moody-Stuart said: "We had our differences with the GCC before Kyoto. After the summit it campaigned against ratification and mandatory emission targets, neither of which we are against."

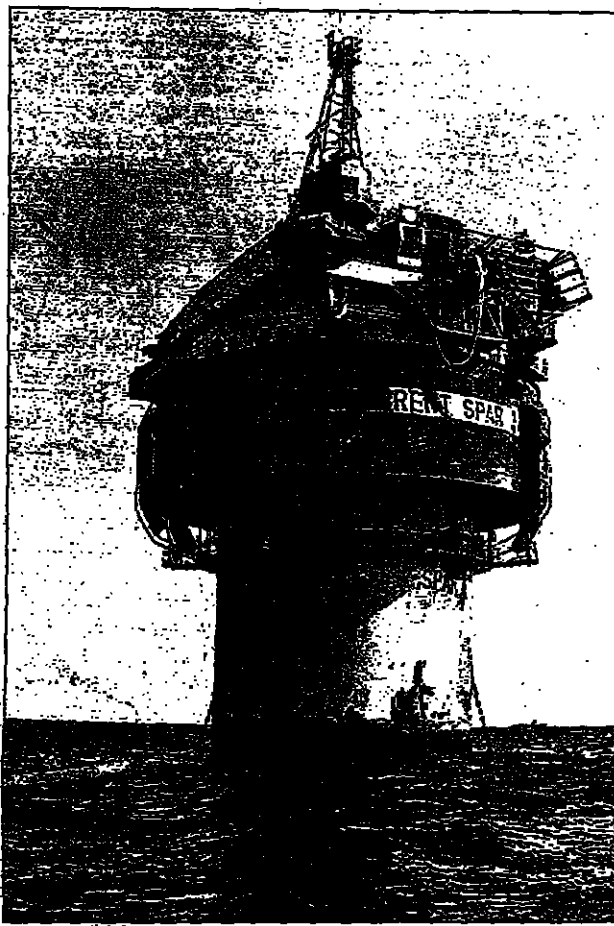
He was speaking as Shell launched a major initiative to raise its profile on social and environmental issues, giving them as much importance as its financial performance.

The groundbreaking initiative makes Shell unique among oil majors and marks one of the most important strategic shifts in the company's history.

Under the initiative Shell will report on its performance annually against nine core general business principles such as support for human rights, sustainable development, business honesty and environmental care.

In its first report, "Profits and Principles" - does there have to be a choice? - Shell discloses that 23 staff were caught and sacked last year for soliciting or accepting bribes, while 95 contracts were cancelled because the contractors did not meet the requirements of the group's business principles.

The initiative is the product of nearly three years' work and follows the public mauling Shell received over the execution of dissident Ken Saro-Wiwa by the Nigerian authorities and the row over Brent Spar, left



The case against: The company suffered badly from the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the row over Brent Spar, left



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The results of the mass consultation were that 50 per cent of views about Shell were either neutral or unfavourable with 10 per cent of people regarding the company as uncaring about the environment and human rights.

"We had looked in the mirror and neither recognised nor liked some of what we saw," the document admits.

A key element of the strategy will be external, independent verification of Shell's performance on the environment and social issues, although Mr Moody-Stuart conceded this would be tremendously difficult to measure in the same way as financial performance.

John Elkington, chairman of SustainAbility, the respected consultancy, has been drafted in to help Shell devise a "triple bottom line" whereby its annual accounts will reflect its economic, environmental and social performance.

The wider community will also be invited to take part. Some 60,000 copies of the "Profits and Principles" document are being issued, each containing a selection of reply cards inviting the public to give Shell their views on different issues such as the circumstances under which it would refuse to do business in a given country.

Mr Moody-Stuart said Nigeria remained "an extremely corrupt country" which accounted for a large number of last year's bribery cases. Even so, Shell could still operate in Nigeria and Russia without breaching its ethical standards.

Outlook, page 21

The Nigerian authorities and the row over the disposal of the Brent Spar oil platform.

The "transformation", as Shell describes it, towards a business that would be more open and socially accountable involved sounding out 7,500 members of the public, 1,300 opinion leaders and 600 staff.

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Argos bid battle still wide open

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

THE £1.9bn bid battle for Argos, the catalogue retailer, reached a new level of intensity yesterday when two leading shareholders declared their intention to back the Argos management against home shopping group Great Universal Stores.

Baillie Gifford, which holds a 6.6 per cent stake in Argos, said it intends to reject the GUS offer. The Scottish fund management group said the 650p offer was "inadequate and fails to fully reflect the strengths and potential of Argos under its new management team."

Its display of support follows a similar move by Prudential which speaks for nearly 7 per cent of Argos. The fund manager confirmed earlier reports that it too intends to support Argos.

It is understood that Prudential feels the GUS bid is opportunistic and fails to reflect the longer term recovery potential of the company. Fund managers there have been impressed by new Argos chief executive Stuart Rose and are prepared to give him a chance.

However, GUS too has won early promises of support ahead of the bid's close on Friday. Gartmore, which holds a 3.3 per cent stake in Argos, said

it intends to vote in favour of the GUS offer.

Mercury Asset Management, which holds a 6 per cent stake, is also expected to accept the GUS cash. So is Standard Life, which owns around 2 per cent.

This leaves the bid wide open, with the 15 per cent stake held by Schroders Investment Management likely to be the deciding vote.

"It is certainly going to be close but it is still 55-45 in GUS's favour," said Nick Bubb, an analyst at SG Securities.

NatWest Securities also feels GUS is still in the driving seat. In a research note entitled "Going, going, gone?" it recommends clients accept GUS's final offer, saying it exceeds the value of an independent Argos.

However, one shareholder said yesterday: "We have always respected what Argos has achieved. In its time it has been an incredibly well-run business. True, it has slipped a bit in the last couple of years but we believe that a good retailer could make it work again."

Other institutional shareholders which have yet to make up their minds include Legal & General and Norwich Union.

Argos shares closed 20p lower at 610p, reflecting the possibility of the bid failing. GUS shares closed down 7p at 813.5p.

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THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

Tesco firing on all cylinders

IT IS hard to fault Tesco's latest set of results. Its like-for-like sales increase of 5 per cent in current trading is comfortably ahead of the industry average (about 3 per cent) and the increase in its market share from 14.6 to 15.2 per cent is impressive. Tesco has established itself as the benchmark in the supermarket sector and a clear leader over its arch-rival Sainsbury's. The share price tells the story. Tesco shares have trebled in five years, during which they have out-performed the market by 30 per cent.

The only problem for investors is that most of this is already in the share price, which edged down 8p to 589p yesterday as the group made noises about a more challenging consumer environment and an increase in competitive pressure from rivals.

Even so Tesco still appears to be firing on all cylinders. In the UK, its different sized formats ranging from Tesco Metro to the huge Tesco Extra hypermarkets are helping to maximise growth opportunities. The laggard in the pack has been Tesco Express, the small petrol forecourt format which has proved popular with customers but continued to lose money.

The strength of the UK operation has enabled management to explore opportunities overseas. Ireland appears to be going well with Northern Ireland turning sales declines into 20 per cent increases while the stores south of the border are showing 10 per cent gains. Central Europe appears to be taking longer with losses expected to rise to £1.5m this year.

With the Cateau business in France sold for £250m last year, Tesco is looking for new routes for expansion and the Far East could be next.

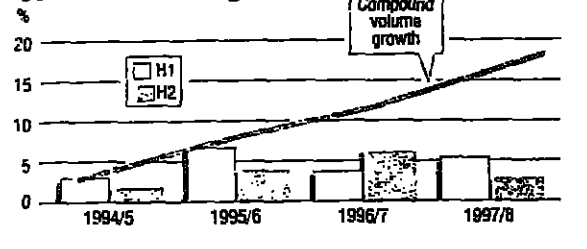
Back home the plan to increase sales of non-food ranges by twice the rate of food sales growth looks achievable. These lines, such as health and beauty and entertainment, already account for 10 per cent of Tesco's sales.

Tesco: At a glance

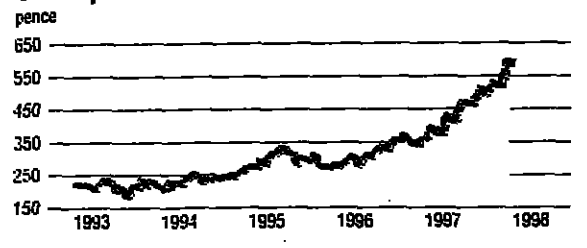
Market value: £13.1bn, share price 589p-8p

Five-year record	94	95	96	97	98
Turnover (£bn)	8.6	10.1	12.1	13.9	16.4
Pre-tax profits (£m)	435	551	675	750	728
Earnings per share (p)	15.2	18.9	22.6	24.1	23.1
Dividends per share (p)	7.5	8.6	9.6	10.3	11.6

Continued volume growth



Share price



Source: Datastream

The coming year will be tougher as struggling rivals such as Sainsbury's and the newly merged Somerfield-Tesco use price weapons to improve sales.

On forecasts of £890m the shares, down yesterday, trade on a forward rating of 22. That is too high to start buying but the shares remain a solid hold.

Doubts over SmithKline

JAN LESCHLY, chief executive of SmithKline Beecham, claimed all was well at the drugs giant yesterday. Who needs a merger with Glaxo Wellcome when our own drugs pipeline will keep producing the goods, he argues.

But the failed merger talks with first AHP, the American drug group, then Glaxo, cannot be swept under the carpet so easily. For a start shareholders are becoming increasingly uneasy at the fall in SmithKline's share price since talks collapsed. The shares have slumped from a peak of

845p in February to close down another 40p to 691p yesterday as the group announced indifferent first quarter figures.

These figures raised more questions than they answered about the group's future and suggested an independent SmithKline may struggle to regain its premium rating. Pre-tax profits rose 8 per cent to £440m. Excluding the impact of the strong pound earnings would have risen 12 per cent to £457m.

But the figures came in at the bottom end of analysts' forecasts. SmithKline also admitted that it would only show low double-figure earnings growth this year. While that is not to be sniffed at it looks pedestrian compared to the sort of growth achieved by the top tier of drugs groups in the US such as Warner Lambert, Eli Lilly and Merck.

SmithKline certainly has an extensive production line of new drugs. But most of these will not hit the market for the next few years at least, mak-

ing it difficult to assess the quality of its pipeline. SmithKline may also find it difficult to fund the heavy expenditure required to push these treatments through clinical trials.

One of doing that would be to look for new merger partners and further consolidation in the pharmaceutical sector is likely. But SmithKline, sitting on a prospective P/E ratio of 30, is not cheap and now would be a good time to take some profits.

St Ives needs more windfalls

SMALL investors in the Nationwide are not alone in hoping for a windfall this summer. St Ives the printing group which produced the tens of millions of circulars for the Halifax and Norwich Union demutualisations and the demerger at Hanson and British Gas, is also hoping for an upturn in activity.

The reduced volume of paper passing through the business was mainly responsible for a modest drop in turnover in the half year to the end of January.

Margins were less affected, and profits actually rose by 2.6 per cent to £24.2m. But the impact of the strong pound on overseas earnings, especially from Dutch and German operations, cost just over £400,000, and increased funding for the group pension schemes as a result of the Budget last July cost £900,000.

Increased sales of paperbacks compensated for a further decline in demand for hardback books, but direct response advertising grew only modestly in the UK and delays in getting new capacity into operation affected sales in Germany and the US. Sales in the UK were also disrupted by the changing size of magazines and new technology.

Analysts downgraded their forecasts by a 1m to £52m. The shares, which fell 13.5p to 516.5p are trading on 15 times forecast current year earnings. After a strong run from a low of 365p last summer the shares now look high enough.

Rank shares slump as figures dismay City

By Andrew Yates

RANK, the Butlin's to Odeon cinema leisure group, disappointed the City yesterday by unveiling a fall in first quarter profits. Its shares slumped 19.5p to 385p as analysts feared the poor figures could stall the recovery the group has shown over the last few months.

Rank's trading statement will also increase the pressure on Andrew Teare, its embattled chief executive, who has been in the firing line from shareholders for his performance since taking control of the group.

Bookings at the traditional British holiday destinations of Butlin's and Haven have lagged behind last year. The terrible weather has prompted tourists to go abroad and Butlin's bookings have been disrupted by a huge revamp of the holiday camps which will cost Rank £139m. Sales of Hard Rock merchandise such as T-shirts and baseball hats have also continued to fall, offsetting a rise in burger sales at the cafe chain.

City analysts were dismayed that operating profits rose by just £1m to £21m in the first three months of the year. One analyst said yesterday: "These



Redcoat blues: Butlin's bookings were hit by a revamp of the camps. Photograph: Andrew Buurman

figures are very disappointing. The growth is low, considering how much the group has spent over the last few years and Hard Rock is still going nowhere."

Another analyst said: "Rank is a bit of a banana skin. It has so many businesses that something like this always seems to come out of the woodwork."

They also pointed out yesterday that Rank's profits will be dented by £20m next year after it completes Islands of Ad-

venture, a new \$2bn theme park being built in Florida in conjunction with Universal Studios. When the scheme is finished Rank will be forced to pass interest on development costs through the profit and loss account.

Rank's figures would have been even worse if it were not for *Titanic*, the blockbuster movie that has taken British cinemas by storm. The success of the film helped admissions

at the group's Odeon chain jump by 34 per cent. Its film duplication operation also had a good three months, with major releases such as *Lost in Space*, *Man in the Iron Mask* and *Primary Colours* helping sales.

Rank claimed that the bulk of the fall in pre-tax profits was due to the absence of a £9m dividend from Xerox. The group disposed of its photocopy business it disposed of 20 per cent stake in Xerox last year.

BBA shares soar on US buy

By Terry Macalister

BBA chief executive Roberto Quarto's plans to transform the former conglomerate into a focused engineering group took another step forward yesterday when the £174m purchase of US-based Veratec, a manufacturer of non-woven materials.

The deal cements BBA's position as a world leader in polymers-based materials, which are used in everything from road building to surgical masks. BBA shares shot up 18.5p to 443p.

Mr Quarto said the deal, to be funded out of existing re-

sources, would be earnings enhancing in the first full year of operation before any restructuring costs. He added that said he was confident of receiving regulatory approval for the deal by the end of June.

"Veratec is not only complementary to our existing activities, but also adds new technology, process and geographical spread in areas such as specialty packaged products and industrial," he said.

Veratec, owned by International Paper Co and with operating profits of \$24.8m on turnover of \$249m, has significant operations in Canada and Mexico where BBA is not active.

The acquisition will also give BBA access to new sales offices in Hong Kong and Japan. Mr Quarto has made clear his interest in increasing business in China.

Will Mackie, analyst with Crédit Lyonnais Laing, said Veratec was an "excellent acquisition". He expects BBA profits to rise from £156m last year to £171m in 1998.

BBA is in the middle of a big restructuring which saw it purchase eight companies worth £300m last year but simultaneously dispose of £184m worth of assets.

After the Veratec deal it still has a war chest of over £200m,

which is likely to be spent on acquisitions in emerging markets.

Under the leadership of Mr Quarto, who took over four years ago, BBA has been gradually concentrating on three legs: materials technology, aviation services and friction materials, particularly brake pads for the car industry.

Since Mr Quarto joined, BBA's non-woven division has grown from a £100m turnover to £400m. With the Veratec acquisition the figure will rise to £550m. Over the same period the BBA share price has risen from a low of 158p to last night's close of 443p.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

JOHN WILLCOCK



JAPANESE tourists may be thin on the ground in London this year due to the Asian financial crisis, but plenty of their countrymen turned up at Finsbury Pavement in the City yesterday for the Yamaichi International auction.

The Yamaichi securities house went belly up late last year, and the contents of the London office were put under the hammer in a three-day auction starting yesterday.

Paintings, dealing desks, hat and coat stands, golf clubs - everything had to go.

Over 600 people, many from the City, attended the first day of sales yesterday supervised by auctioneers Henry Butcher. John Judson of Henry Butcher said: "Everything's going very well. We had very good prices, especially for the pictures, which went for up to £15,000."

"We're not fine art people, we're industrial (auctioneers) - but an oil painting is a chattel, like any other," Mr Judson mused.

As well as the Japanese, whom Mr Judson presumed were buying a few sentimental mementos to take home, were a host of hard-nosed fine-art dealers. "We had four phone lines going for the pictures," Mr Judson said. A world record price of £6,500 was paid for one daubing, by Janus La Cour, he added.

Then there were the contents of the four flats run by Yamaichi across London, where drinks cabinets and Davidoff cigar boxes seemed to be the order of the day.

Today will be rather more prosaic, added Mr Judson, with computers and photocopiers up for grabs.

Christine Farnish is a woman with a mission. Well, two, in fact. The first is to find a flat in London's Docklands, the location of her new job as director of Consumer Relations with the fledgling Financial Services Authority (FSA).

The second is to harmonise the eight financial ombudsman schemes that already exist, such as PIA Ombudsman, in order that the FSA can offer a "one stop shop for consumers".

Currently Ms Farnish is acting deputy director general of Ofel, the telecoms regulator. She has been there for the last four-and-a-half years, and Ofel's recently appointed director general, David Edmunds, is busy recruiting a successor. "I heard about this new job on his first day," Ms Farnish recalls.

So will she be happy swapping Ofel's Ludgate Hill offices in the heart of London for the windy towers of Canary Wharf? "Yes, no problem," she gamely replies, before admitting that commuting in from her current home in Camberidge will be impossible. Unravelling the pensions miss-selling scandal should be a doddle in comparison.

I'M PLEASED to see that Robin Spencer has made it back in one piece after his Sahara marathon. The insolvency lawyer

from Lovell White Durrant came 234th out of a field of nearly 400 in the 229-kilometre race which finished this month.

"When I got back to the UK I had to go straight to casualty to have my blisters dressed," says Mr Spencer. "It was agony. But crossing the finishing line was the happiest moment of my life."

Robin raised £28,000 for the Variety Club Children's Hospital at King's College Hospital London. A year ago he was a 38-year-old couch potato of 13.5 stone. Having run an average of 20 miles a day over seven days in southern Morocco he is now a svelte 10.5 stone.

Robin bumped into some other City types doing the marathon: Jonathan Miles from Merrill Lynch, John Guthrie from J Rothschild Assurance in Mayfair, and two Lloyd's brokers from Stirling Besso, Roddy Caxton-Spencer and Chris Ley.

Now it's back to dull grey reality, or in Robin's case the continuing liquidation of the Sovereign Marine & General Insurance Company, a subsidiary of Willis Carroon. Sovereign went under last July.

Robin says things are relatively quiet on the insolvency front in the UK. "It's a cyclical business, so I picked an opportune time to go running in the Sahara. But everyone's expecting a downturn in the economy in a year's time," he adds, with relish.

CLEAR your diaries. The National Federation of Subpostmasters declares that "hundreds of subpostmasters from across the UK will converge on Bournemouth next month for their annual conference."

The NFS continues: "Hot issues will include Royal Mail undermining the work of post offices by selling stamps direct to retailers; demands for the Government to stop using the Post Office as a giant piggy bank; and how the millennium bug will affect nearly 20,000 subpost offices."

I've booked my ticket already.

Record pensions mis-selling fine for Sun Life of Canada

By Andrew Verity

SUN LIFE of Canada group yesterday faced being labelled the worst culprit of all in the pension mis-selling review as regulators fined the society £600,000 - a record.

The Personal Investment Authority attacked the company for serious failings in reviewing and compensating nearly 30,000 customers who might be owed thousands of pounds each because of mis-selling.

The PIA found that Confederation Life, a SLOC subsidiary, had failed to review the cases of 30,000 customers who might be owed compensation. The PIA also charged an additional £125,000 in costs.

Confederation Life had farmed out the work of mailing and chasing investors to an external mailing house. But senior executives at SLOC did not

bother to check that it was carrying out its work correctly.

The failings were uncovered by a PIA visit in February last year. That was two years and four months after SLOC was first ordered to begin its review of mis-selling in October 1994.

By that time, Sun Life of Canada (UK), which is unrelated to the Bristol-based Sun Life, had still failed to trace 3,900 investors - many of whom could be owed around £8,000 each - for whom it had no current address.

"The failings were significantly affected by a weakness in project planning for carrying out the pensions review project at that time," the PIA said.

SLOC has now admitted it failed to take all reasonable steps to carry out the review. In common with other companies fined for mis-selling, it believed it should focus on cases most likely to be owed redress.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
James Dicks (I)	25.90m (19.94m)	0.728m (0.621m)	5.83p (4.27p)	2.31p (2.81p)
Perrys Group (I)	11.88m (10.22m)	0.713m (0.625m)	4.7p (3.9p)	1.4p (1.2p)
Jackson Group (I)	98.75m (81.57m)	3.01m (1.21m)	8.8p (3.9p)	3.2p (2.1p)
James Finlay (I)	178.47m (168.21m)	14.24m (12.03m)	10.4p (8.9p)	4.15p (3.65p)
Harlequin Group (I)	76.18m (67.89m)	6.02m (5.9m)	14.8p (14.8p)	4.75p (4.3p)
Jerome Group (I)	35.68m (34.40m)	0.388m (1.14m)	2.8p (8.1p)	3.375p (3.0p)
St Ives (I)	179.66m (183.59m)	24.17m (23.58m)	16.27p (15.84p)	3.75p (3.40p)
Tesco (I)	17.78m (14.98m)	728.0m (750.0m)	23.1p (24.1p)	11.6p (11.6p)

(I) = Final (I) = Interim EPS is pre-exceptionals

Kwik Save directors to share £1m pay-off after shake-up

TWO directors could leave Somerfield with more than £1m in compensation between them after a boardroom shake-up following the supermarket group's £1.3bn merger with Kwik Save. David Coles, Somerfield's marketing director, and Derek Pretty, Kwik Save's finance director, are to leave the group. Both are on two-year contracts, with Mr Coles earning £162,750 last year and Mr Pretty £183,000. They also hold substantial share options. David Simons, Somerfield's chief executive, will take "personal charge" of Kwik Save as it is integrated with the Somerfield business.

MEPC moves out of America

MEPC yesterday took a step towards leaving the US by announcing a \$525m cash deal to sell eight shopping centres. The property group concluded it was not large enough to compete in the US retail property market. The sale of its other US assets, with a book value of around £300m, is imminent. MEPC shares rose 8p to 611p.

NatWest buy-backs approved

NATWEST's chairman told shareholders at the bank's annual meeting yesterday that, after a "poor" 1997, the group had made "a solid start" to 1998. Its chairman, Lord Alexander of Weedon, added that the bank was about to start "a rolling programme of share purchases", and shareholders voted to give NatWest the authority to buy back up to 100 million shares.

Halifax sees new lending up

HALIFAX said yesterday that new mortgage lending was picking up from a slow start to the year, and that remortgage activity had also increased in recent weeks. Speaking at the bank's general meeting, Jon Foulds, Halifax's chairman, urged Birmingham Midshires Building Society to disentangle itself from an exclusivity agreement with Royal Bank of Scotland, which agreed a £630m deal with Midshires last year. Halifax made a £780m counter-offer for Midshires last month.

Citicorp profits rise to \$1.1bn

CITICORP, the second largest US bank, said its first-quarter profits were up by 7 per cent to \$1.1bn (£660m), just ahead of expectations. The bank - which is planning a \$150bn mega-merger with Travelers, the financial services giant - added that booming financial markets more than offset weaknesses in the Far East.

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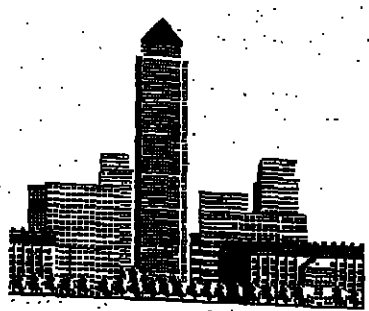
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0800

Could the euro ever take on the dollar?



OUTLOOK
ON THE PROSPECTS
FOR THE EUROPEAN
SINGLE CURRENCY.
SHELL'S ATTEMPT TO
AUDIT ITS SOCIAL
AND ECOLOGICAL
PERFORMANCE, AND
A POSSIBLE TURNING
POINT FOR STERLING

CAN THE euro hope to achieve a reserve currency status that rivals or even overtakes the dollar? Perhaps more important, does anyone care, other than power-hungry politicians? According to a new study of the issue, "Euro versus the dollar," by Richard Portes of the London Business School and Helene Rey of the LSE, we ought to, for quite apart from the geopolitical influence that the dollar's present hegemony confers on the US, there are real, tangible economic benefits in being a powerful reserve currency too.

With a degree of precision only economists seem capable of, the writers put this at 0.5 per cent of annual GDP for Europe. It should be stressed that this defines the economic benefit only of replacing the dollar as the main global currency for financial asset transactions. It does not quantify the euro's total economic impact, which is anyone's guess and presumably would be much larger.

This reserve currency benefit comes in three forms. First there is an obvious competitive advantage for the markets and institutions of the reserve currency's country. Second, there is an advantage for trade in having other countries peg their exchange rates to one's own. Third, there is the ability to finance balance of payments and budget deficits with liabilities denominated in the international money, which other countries will accept without limit.

It is this third advantage which seems to be the most potent, for it seems to offer the opportunity to be indebted to foreign countries either free of charge, because central bankers, businesses and individ-

uals feel obliged to hold large quantities of your currency as a reserve, or at least at favourable interest rates.

An estimated 60 per cent of the total stock of dollars is held by foreigners. The effect is to allow the US to obtain real resources (not imports) in return for issuing costless notes.

OK, so that's enough of the economic tutorial. There do indeed seem to be benefits beyond those of prestige and political clout in being a big reserve currency. But can the euro achieve it?

US commentators and politicians are almost universally sceptical, but they would be, wouldn't they, since they have so much to lose from it. The authors of this study adopt the contrary view, if only because of the size effect: the euro zone will eventually be larger, both in terms of number of people and GDP, than the US. However, the process will depend crucially on the development and integration of capital markets in Europe, for without a certain critical level of liquidity, foreigners will not want to hold euro denominated assets on anything like the same scale as dollar ones.

Optimists insist that the mere existence of the euro will drive the necessary degree of integration and the establishment of a properly benchmarked debt market. If this does indeed occur, and Britain is not soon a part of the single currency, then the City needs to watch out. It is unlikely in the extreme that Europe would tolerate a reserve currency run out of a place which wasn't a member, or indeed that the City could create such a demand for the euro. Paradoxically, then, the City's best hope of remaining

Europe's leading financial centre may lie in the euro's failure as a world currency, its inability to look the dollar in the face.

Shell takes the high moral road

MARK Moody-Stuart has looked in the mirror and is perturbed at what he sees. This is not a reference to the Shell chairman's rather intimidating pair of bushy white eyebrows but the reaction his company engenders when held up to the mirror of public perception. A significant proportion of those asked immediately think of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Brent Spar and marauding roughnecks and vote with their feet.

Now Shell has decided to do something about it and the result is the first annual audit of its financial, social and environmental performance. It will be updated annually and verified externally and, who knows, one day Mr Moody-Stuart's pay may depend as much on how well Shell treats caribou migrating across the frozen tundra as what he does for total shareholder return.

It would be easy to be cynical about Shell's attempt to play the cards of ecological and social awareness and sustainable development - particularly when the concept of a sustainable oil company is a contradiction in terms. It would be fun to wonder how many rain forests will be chopped down to produce the 60,000 copies that Shell is sending out of "Profits and Principles - does there have to be a choice?"

But that would be to miss the point. In

a world of depressingly shallow business values, Shell's attempt to give equal weight to social and environmental values as well as the bottom line is refreshing and laudable. It also surely makes business sense as was made plain by the German boycott of Shell that followed Brent Spar.

The devil will, of course, be in the implementation. It is one thing to adopt the moral high ground, it is another to actually operate on it and then verify the results when auditors already find it difficult enough accounting for the latest financial instruments. Mr Moody-Stuart may fail but you cannot fault him for trying. You can be sure of Shell for that.

Pound could be on the way down

IS THE pound on its way down at last? Carry tourists might do worse than buy their holiday money immediately, figuring that even if the exchange rate against the currencies of Europe's sunspots does go back up, it will not get much higher. The lost gain from a renewed rise is likely to pale in comparison with the potential loss from a fall in sterling between now and August.

More important than the pressing question of summer holiday finance is whether or not exporters can comfort themselves with the thought that the worst of their sterling pound pain is over. At DM3.00 the exchange rate is still too high for many of them, but if the rest of this week's economic figures contain no unpleasant surprises, it might be heading for decisively

lower territory. Most exporters will be hoping the slide won't stop until it reaches round about the DM2.65 level.

Vauxhall workers will be sharing this hope, following their novelty pay deal which adds a half per cent increase if sterling stays below DM2.70 for two consecutive months. This is profit-related pay with a twist, linking the deal to the exchange rate related element of the company's earnings, and as such represents something of a first. Nor should such a dive in the exchange rate be completely discounted, if UK interest rates have not quite peaked yet, they soon will, while a rise in German rates looks closer as signs of economic recovery on the Continent blossom. Sterling is not a one-way bet in the market any longer.

On the other hand, it would be foolish to count on a big depreciation. As long as Britain stays outside the single currency, investors will be attracted to sterling by its higher yields and risk diversification.

Besides, perhaps this is a real turning point. Future historians may look back and say the late 1990s saw the UK's transition to a low-inflation, stable growth economy. If so, the pound is at present less overvalued than some businesses have claimed, and sterling is on the verge of becoming a permanently strong currency, rather than one prone to frequent devaluation because of Britain's higher relative inflation. Those Vauxhall employees should not regard their extra half per cent as money in the bank just yet. And as for when to buy our holiday money, we may not have to worry too much in future about when we buy it.

Home Counties accepts £58m bid from Eastern

By Terry Macalister

HOME Counties Newspapers, publisher of the *Hampstead and Highgate Gazette*, yesterday dashed the hopes of two rival suitors by accepting a £58m bid from Eastern Counties Newspapers, the privately owned group.

Southnews, the acquisitive media group, tabled a £60m offer on Monday while Johnston Press had previously seen its £52m bid lapse after it was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC).

Bill Coppin, Gardner,

Home Counties' chief executive, said the Eastern bid had received irrevocable acceptance from 60 per cent of the shareholders and was attractive because it "removed all uncertainties". The offer will need 90 per cent acceptance to go through.

Norwich-based Eastern Counties, owned by the former mustard-making Coleman family and publishers of the *East Anglian Daily Times*, said it believed Home Counties was a perfect fit.

Peter Strong, the chief executive of Eastern, said: "We already have significant trading

ties with Home Counties and print the *Hampstead and Highgate Gazette*. But the deal allows us to extend our East Anglian footprint south and west."

Both Eastern and Home Counties are confident that the lack of overlap between their activities means there is little likelihood of an MMC referral.

The City welcomed the agreed bid, marking up the Home Counties share price 7.5p to 560p. Anthony De Larinaga, media analyst with Parimure Gordon said Home Counties had received "a decent price".

Liffe's board meets to consider its options

By Lea Paterson

THE BOARD of Liffe, London's troubled financial futures and options exchange, was last night thrashing out details of radical proposals for structural change which will be made public later today.

The key recommendation is expected to be that Liffe severs ties between ownership of the exchange and permits allowing traders to trade - which could mean full demutualisation and possibly flotation. Many at Liffe believe reform of the

ownership structure is vital if the exchange is to respond to competition, particularly from the Deutsche Terminborse (DTB), Liffe's Frankfurt-based arch-rival.

Liffe's board is also likely to provide details of the electronic trading system it plans to introduce next year.

Liffe's 215-strong membership will vote on the board's proposals at an extraordinary meeting on 21 May.

At the moment, Liffe is a mutual organisation owned by its members. Members receive one trading permit for each share in Liffe and non-shareholders cannot trade on the exchange.

Key to the success of any electronic trading system is the ability to attract large numbers of traders. Liffe insiders believe this cannot be achieved unless the "one share - one permit" system is abolished.

One source explained: "In the future, you will have our larger members wanting to

install terminals for, say, 100 of their traders. Under the current system, this would only be possible if that member bought 100 shares. What you need to do is to break the link between shareholding and the trading permit."

Although there is understood to be a broad consensus at Liffe that the "one share - one permit" system should be ended, there is rather less agreement about what should replace it.

One source said: "One option would be to give shareholders a dividend rather than a permit... and to run the exchange for profit."

This option - full demutualisation - would inevitably lead to flotation, according to some sector watchers, although it is thought unlikely the board will recommend flotation today. Full demutualisation could also help end the infighting that has hindered effective decision making at Liffe.

Full demutualisation is not

the only way forward, according to Liffe sources. Instead, Liffe could become a "hybrid" organisation where the link between shares and permits is broken but the exchange continues to be run on a "not for profit" basis. "The problem is determining an appropriate benefit for shareholders that is not a dividend and is not a permit," one source said.

Liffe's board is also expected to announce whether it has decided to develop its own electronic trading system or buy in a system from one of its competitors.

One system it will not be introducing, though, will be the DTB's. The DTB's cheeky offer to install its system at Liffe for free has been firmly rejected by Jack Wigglesworth, Liffe's chairman.

Last week, Liffe's members voted to introduce a full-time chairman and to cut down the size of its board in an attempt to focus management and facilitate decision making.

Life insurers suffer from strong pound

By Andrew Verity

TWO of Britain's biggest life insurance companies yesterday revealed they had been hit hard in the first quarter of 1998 by tough trading conditions and the strength of the pound.

Prudential reported worldwide sales of regular premium products slipped to £124m between January and March from £128m in the same period last year, the first fall in over three years. Its US subsidiary, Jackson National Life, saw sales drop to \$313m (£180m) from \$350m in the first quarter of 1997.

Prudential suffered a haemorrhaging of its sales force, which dropped in the year to March from 5,300 to 4,250. The Pru imposed a recruitment freeze last summer after regulators uncovered serious failings in its efforts to compensate victims of pension mis-selling.

Norwich Union's new business jumped by 14 per cent to £88m. But analysts said growth was 8 per cent lower than it would have been but for sterling.

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Foreign Exchange Rates											
Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country		
Australia	100.00	2.75	France	100.00	6.55	Italy	100.00	2.00	Spain	100.00	166.64
Belgium	233.63	36.36	Germany	100.00	2.36	Japan	100.00	354.63	Sweden	100.00	13.76
Canada	2.00	0.70	Greece	100.00	340.75	South Africa	100.00	4.76	Switzerland	100.00	7.20
Denmark	136.76	16.54	Hong Kong	100.00	7.80	Taiwan	100.00	20.37	UK	100.00	1.00
Finland	5.94	0.94	India	100.00	47.83	Thailand	100.00	50.76			
France	100.00	6.55	Indonesia	100.00	1546.34	US	100.00	1.00			
Germany	100.00	2.36	Israel	100.00	3.48						
Greece	100.00	340.75	Italy	100.00	2.00						
Hong Kong	100.00	7.80	Japan	100.00	354.63						
India	100.00	47.83	South Africa	100.00	4.76						
Indonesia	100.00	1546.34	Taiwan	100.00	20.37						
Israel	100.00	3.48	Thailand	100.00	50.76						
Italy	100.00	2.00	US	100.00	1.00						
Japan	100.00	354.63									
South Africa	100.00	4.76									
Taiwan	100.00	20.37									
Thailand	100.00	50.76									
US	100.00	1.00									

Other Spot Rates											
Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country		
Argentina	100.00	1.36	Chile	100.00	800.00	Colombia	100.00	2000.00	Costa Rica	100.00	2.00
Brazil	100.00	2.75	Egypt	100.00	2.00	Cuba	100.00	24.00	Czech Rep	100.00	20.37
Canada	100.00	0.70	France	100.00	6.55	Guatemala	100.00	2.00	Dominican Rep	100.00	20.00
Denmark	100.00	16.54	Germany	100.00	2.36	Honduras	100.00	2.00	El Salvador	100.00	2.00
Finland	100.00	5.94	Greece	100.00	340.75	India	100.00	47.83	Guatemala	100.00	2.00
France	100.00	6.55	Hong Kong	100.00	7.80	Indonesia	100.00	1546.34	Honduras	100.00	2.00
Germany	100.00	2.36	India	100.00	47.83	Israel	100.00	3.48	El Salvador	100.00	2.00
Greece	100.00	340.75	Indonesia	100.00	1546.34	Italy	100.00	2.00	Guatemala	100.00	2.00
Hong Kong	100.00	7.80	Israel	100.00	3.48	Japan	100.00	354.63	Honduras	100.00	2.00
India	100.00	47.83	Italy	100.00	2.00	South Africa	100.00	4.76	El Salvador	100.00	2.00
Indonesia	100.00	1546.34	Japan	100.00	354.63	Taiwan	100.00	20.37	Guatemala	100.00	2.00
Israel	100.00	3.48	South Africa	100.00	4.76	Thailand	100.00	50.76	Honduras	100.00	2.00
Italy	100.00	2.00	Taiwan	100.00	20.37	US	100.00	1.00	El Salvador	100.00	2.00
Japan	100.00	354.63	Thailand	100.00	50.76						
South Africa	100.00	4.76	US	100.00	1.00						
Taiwan	100.00	20.37									
Thailand	100.00	50.76									
US	100.00	1.00									

Interest Rates									
Country	Rate	Country	Rate	Country	Rate	Country	Rate	Country	Rate
UK	10.00%	Germany	8.00%	US	5.00%	Japan	5.00%	France	6.00%
Base	10.00								

Bond Yields										
Country	3 mth	chg	1 yr	chg	2 yr	chg	5 yr	chg	10 yr	chg
Australia	4.55	0.01	4.90	0.00	4.99	0.01	5.42	0.02	5.76	0.04
Belgium	3.73	0.03	3.95	0.06	4.26	0.02	4.58	0.01	5.03	0.03
Canada	4.97	0.02	4.98	0.00	4.97	0.04	5.19	0.02	5.37	0.02
ECB	4.28	0.02	4.32	0.01	4.32	0.01	4.54	0.07	5.01	0.01
France	0.00	0.00	3.76	0.00	4.16	0.01	4.62	0.01	4.98	0.03
Germany	3.66	0.00	3.94	0.00	4.14	0.02	4.49	0.02	4.83	0.02
Italy	5.17	0.02	5.46	0.00	5.43	0.02	5.82	0.02	6.29	0.02
Japan	0.51	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.57	0.00	1.12	0.01	1.79	0.02
Sweden	3.82	0.01	3.94	0.00	4.22	0.01	4.37	0.01	4.95	0.03
Spain	4.27	0.02	4.53	0.00	4.81	0.01	4.97	0.02	5.09	0.02
Switzerland	4.37	0.00	4.63	0.00	4.79	0.00	4.93	0.01	5.05	0.05
Stand	1.44	0.00	1.78	0.01	1.96	0.02	2.44	0.02	3.17	0.07
UK	7.00	0.06	6.75	0.02	6.72	0.02	6.13	0.00	5.81	0.05
US	4.93	0.05	5.11	0.01	5.66	0.03	5.62	0.02	5.66	0.02

Money Market Rates									
Instrument	Rate	1 week	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year			
Treasury Bills	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75			
Domestic Deposits	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75			
Exporting Deposits	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75			
Banking Deposits	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75			
Sterling CDs	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75			
Banking CDs	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75			
CD Deposits	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75			

Life Financial Futures									
Contract	Settlement	High	Low	Est. Price	Est. Vol.	Est. Inter.			
Long Call	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			
Long Put	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			
Short Call	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			
Short Put	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			

Life FTSE 100 Index Option									
Series	Call	Put	Call	Put	Call	Put	Call	Put	Call
10000	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
10500	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
11000	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00
11500	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00

Commodity Indices									
Index	Base Date	Last	Chg	% Chg	31 Dec	% Chg YTD			
Index	1970=100	100.00	1.00	1.00	100.00	0.00			
Agricultural	1970=100	100.00	1.00	1.00	100.00	0.00			
Energy	1970=100	100.00	1.00	1.00	100.00	0.00			
Industrial	1970=100	100.00	1.00	1.00	100.00	0.00			
Metals	1970=100	100.00	1.00	1.00	100.00	0.00			
Price Metals	1970=100	100.00	1.00	1.00	100.00	0.00			

Energy									
Instrument	Settlement	High	Low	Est. Price	Est. Vol.	Est. Inter.			
Long Call	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			
Long Put	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			
Short Call	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			
Short Put	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			

Industrial Metals									
Instrument	Settlement	High	Low	Est. Price	Est. Vol.	Est. Inter.			
Long Call	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			
Long Put	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			
Short Call	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			
Short Put	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			

Precious Metals									
Instrument	Settlement	High	Low	Est. Price	Est. Vol.	Est. Inter.			
Long Call	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			
Long Put	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			
Short Call	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			
Short Put	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			

Agricultural									
Instrument	Settlement	High	Low	Est. Price	Est. Vol.	Est. Inter.			
Long Call	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			
Long Put	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			
Short Call	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			
Short Put	Jan-98	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00			

100 Largest Insurance Funds									
Fund	Assets	Liabilities	Assets	Liabilities	Assets	Liabilities	Assets	Liabilities	Assets
AXA	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
AXA	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
AXA	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
AXA	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
AXA	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Bloomberg											
Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country		
Australia	100.00	2.75	France	100.00	6.55	Italy	100.00	2.00	Spain	100.00	166.64
Belgium	233.63	36.36	Germany	100.00	2.36	Japan	100.00	354.63	Sweden	100.00	13.76
Canada	2.00	0.70	Greece	100.00	340.75	South Africa	100.00	4.76	Switzerland	100.00	7.20
Denmark	136.76	16.54	Hong Kong	100.00	7.80	Taiwan	100.00	20.37	UK	100.00	1.00
Finland	5.94	0.94	India	100.00	47.83	Thailand	100.00	50.76			
France	100.00	6.55	Indonesia	100.00	1546.34	US	100.00	1.00			
Germany	100.00	2.36	Israel	100.00	3.48						
Greece	100.00	340.75	Italy	100.00	2.00						
Hong Kong	100.00	7.80	Japan	100.00	354.63						
India	100.00	47.83	South Africa	100.00	4.76						
Indonesia	100.00	1546.34	Taiwan	100.00	20.37						
Israel	100.00	3.48	Thailand	100.00	50.76						
Italy	100.00	2.00	US	100.00	1.00						
Japan	100.00	354.63									
South Africa	100.00	4.76									
Taiwan	100.00	20.37									
Thailand	100.00	50.76									
US	100.00	1.00									

Bloomberg											
Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country		
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Canada	2.00	0.70	Greece	100.00	340.75	South Africa	100.00	4.76	Switzerland	100.00	7.20
Denmark	136.76	16.54	Hong Kong	100.00	7.80	Taiwan	100.00	20.37	UK	100.00	1.00
Finland	5.94	0.94	India	100.00	47.83	Thailand	100.00	50.76			
France	100.00	6.55	Indonesia	100.00	1546.34	US	100.00	1.00			
Germany	100.00	2.36	Israel	100.00	3.48						
Greece	100.00	340.75	Italy	100.00	2.00						
Hong Kong	100.00	7.80	Japan	100.00	354.63						
India	100.00	47.83	South Africa	100.00	4.76						
Indonesia	100.00	1546.34	Taiwan	100.00	20.37						

McKiernan coy about her record prospects

IT WOULD be fair to say that Catherine McKiernan is not talking up her chances for this Sunday's Flora London Marathon. The only statement of intent which could be construed as a determination to reach the finish line.

Indeed, so keen was the quietly spoken farmer's daughter from County Cavan to avoid probing questions over her likely performance that she flew straight back to Dublin after her promotional appearance and will not return until the day before the race.

But this 25-year-old Irish runner has no need to trumpet her chances in what will be only the second marathon of her career. Her record is eloquent enough.

Last October she won the Berlin marathon in 2hr 23min 44sec - the fastest debut time for a woman. She comes to London unbeaten on any surface for just over a year, a record which included a prodigious half-marathon victory in

Hopes are high for an Irishwoman in Sunday's London Marathon. Mike Rowbottom reports

Lisbon last month over a field including two of her rivals on Sunday, Liz McColgan and the reigning champion, Joyce Chepchumba of Kenya. McKiernan's time of 67min 50sec was the third fastest in history.

That vein of form encouraged predictions that she could set a world best on the streets of London; indeed, for the first time in seven years, the organisers have insured against that eventuality in the women's race.

The task became significantly more difficult on Sunday when Kenya's Tegla Loroupe took 19 seconds off the mark Ingrid Kristiansen set in London 13 years ago, winning the Rotterdam marathon in 2hr 30min 47sec.

Loroupe was paced by two male runners, assistance which would not be available to McKiernan as the women run their own race in London, starting half an hour before the men.

But the Irish runner refused resolutely to be drawn on whether she was capable of improving on Loroupe's time.

"I didn't get very excited about Rotterdam to be honest," she said. "The world record had been there for a long while and it was bound to be broken some time. But I am not thinking about the world record at all." Did that mean that she did not think she was capable of running a world best? "I just have no comment on the world record at all," she said, with a smile that twinkled on the edge of exasperation. "Only the Man Above knows," she added. "You can't predict what will happen."

True, of course. But while the Man Above may be the only one with full knowledge, the sports scientists at Trinity College, Dublin, where McKiernan receives regular physiological testing, have a pretty good idea about what she can achieve.

Smith has been the level of her performances on the treadmill that the technicians have been urging McKiernan to step up to the marathon distance for several years. "The tests have shown that I'm made for the marathon more than any other distance," she said.

Data drawn from a visit shortly before her Lisbon half-marathon pointed to a time within five seconds of the one she achieved. What her visit to the performance laboratory a week ago revealed was something she was not passing on. But she looked pleased enough about it.

"Things went well. Things are looking good," she said. "Better than her session before the Berlin marathon?" she was asked. Reproachful look. "It was a different test, and it wasn't done at the same stage. You can't compare."

But we know, and she knows we know, that something special could be in the offing.

McKiernan's decision to prepare for marathon running was taken in the wake of her



Catherine McKiernan, in London yesterday, looks in excellent form for Sunday's Marathon. Photograph: Allsport

frustration at failing to win at the World Cross-Country Championships, where she finished a tantalising second for four successive years.

If she felt a shudder of regret last month when her Irish rival So-

nia O'Sullivan took the title in her absence, she was sporting enough not to hint at it. "I was pleased for Sonia," she said. "She'd been through a tough time and she hadn't been treated very well by the media back home."

"Maybe when I get older I will look at myself and say, 'God, I wish I had won it one time.' But they are going to be holding the World Cross-Country again next year, aren't they?" she said with another grin.

In the meantime, McKiernan is planning a major advance in her career on a different surface. At least that is what we presume. "If you say very little, it's the safest thing," she concluded.

Rain denies Durham chance of victory

Cricket

By Myles Hodgson
at Edgbaston

Warwickshire 336 & 187
Durham 305 & 90-5
Match drawn

NICK SPEAK ended his personal run of failures but was denied the opportunity of improving Durham's away record in the Britannic Assurance County Championship when rain washed out a possible exciting finish against Warwickshire here yesterday.

The former Lancashire batsman, who left Old Trafford to secure regular first-team cricket a year ago, but in his debut

season when he scored only 274 Championship runs. But, given the opportunity to lead Durham to victory, Speak seized the chance and scored his first half-century since the opening game of last season.

Chasing a tough, but reachable target of 219 to claim their first away win since beating Glamorgan at Swansea in June 1995, Durham had reached 90 for 5, with Speak unbeaten on 50, and were looking capable of challenging for victory.

"It's very disappointing to finish like this," Speak said. "Last year's behind me, and I have nothing to prove to anybody except myself - I have given 100 per cent whether I have been struggling or not."

"I have enjoyed having Graham Gooch with us for the past few days. It's been a great benefit to all the batsmen in the squad and it's good to be reassured by someone of his stature."

"We thought we could get the runs we needed to win - it's all about believing you can compete with a side as strong as Warwickshire. Last year was a stabilising one for us, but now we are looking to win games."

Both sides were keyed up for an exciting finale until the rain returned. It had delayed the start for half an hour and intervened again in mid-afternoon, limiting the day's play to only 35.1 overs.

Warwickshire had seemed the likelier victors after Dougie Brown and Ed Gidkins made

early inroads, reducing Durham to 49 for 4 just after lunch.

Speak, though, rose to the challenge and grew ever more fluent at the crease. He relegated his batting partner, Martin Speight, to the role of virtual spectator and hit Gidkins for two boundaries in one over.

He reached his half-century, his first in 18 Championship innings, off just 73 deliveries with his eighth boundary through midwicket off Edmond and raised Durham's hopes of claiming only their fifth Championship away-victory in 54 attempts since becoming a first-class county. But after Speight had gloved Brown to wicketkeeper Tony Frost in the next over, the rain returned.

White in the right mood for Yorkshire

CRAIG WHITE, who has his sights on an England recall this season, returned figures of 4 for 13 in 12.2 overs as Yorkshire clinched a 215-run win over Somerset yesterday in the opening County Championship match at Headingley.

White took four of the five wickets to fall on the final morning but the visitors, despite being hit by illness, fought doggedly and prolonged their resistance until just before lunch, when Andrew Caddick was last man out.

Resuming on 46 for 5 and 305 runs short of victory, Somerset ran into further trouble as soon as the first ball had been bowled by Paul Hutterston. Simon Ecclestone's knee appeared to lock and he was forced to retire hurt for 16 to be replaced by Firan Holloway.

After nearly an hour of resistance by Holloway and Marcus Trescothick, it was White who broke through when Holloway, attempting a defensive shot, played on for six.

Trescothick's 80-minute innings, which contained four boundaries, was ended by a return catch by White and, although Ecclestone returned to the crease with a runner, he lost Graham Rose, who was well caught by Bradley Parker on the long-leg boundary during a good spell by Darren Gough.

Ecclestone battled on bravely for a time before falling to White's slower ball and the all-rounder then had Caddick caught behind the wicket, leaving Kevin Shine on 15 not out.

Elsewhere, a result was manufactured at Canterbury despite the wet weather. After Middlesex were dismissed for 228 in their first innings, Kent forfeited theirs and served up some silly bowling in a brief Middlesex second knock. Set 252 to win off a minimum of 60 overs, Kent reached their target for the loss of six wickets. Alan Wells led the way with 77.

Worcestershire saw off Essex by six wickets on New Road, thanks largely to a knock of 53 from Vikram Solanki. Stuart Law scored 87 in Essex's second innings of 310.

Scoreboard

Britannic Assurance County Championship

Final day of four

Kent v Middlesex
Canterbury: Kent (20pts) bt Middlesex (1) by four wickets.

Middlesex: 1st Innings
Overseas: 148 for 3

O A Shah bowled by Fleming 40

N R Brown bowled by Hogg 17

R L Johnson bowled by Phillips 1

J P Hewitt c & b Patel 3

A C Fraser c & b Patel 3

T F Bloomfield not out 8

Extras (btl, w) 104

Total (28.1 overs) 228

Fall: 1-73, 2-82, 3-118, 4-124, 5-144, 6-153, 7-164, 8-204, 9-228, 10-228

Bowling: McCann 2-2-11, 4-3-10; Headley 22-6-50-2; Patel 10-2-12-2; Phillips 21-6-65-3; Ealham 11-4-16-0; Fleming 13-5-32-3

Kent: 1st Innings

Middlesex: 2nd Innings

R A Kettleborough not out 11

J L Langer not out 8

Extras 1

Total (for 10 dec, 5 overs) 23

Did not bat: M R Ramprakash, M W Gurney, S Shah, C D Nisbet, J Johnson, J P Hewitt, A R C Fraser, T F Bloomfield

Bowling: Walker 3-0-16-0; Patel 2-0-7-0

MSX: 2nd Innings

D P Fulton c Brown b Hewitt 4

R W T Key b Hewitt 15

M J Walker c Kettleborough b Johnson 68

A P Wells b Fraser 1

M V Ramprakash c Johnson b Hewitt 35

T S A Marsh c & b Johnson 7

M A Macgregor not out 6

Extras (btl, w) 108

Total (for 6, 58.4 overs) 253

Did not bat: C B 35, 3-27, 4-70, 5-208, 6-223

Did not bat: M M Patel, D W Headley, B J Phillips

Bowling: Fraser 20-4-73-1; Hewitt 14-3-49-2; Bloomfield 6-1-29-1; Johnson 14-2-71-2; Ramprakash 5-1-16-0

Umpires: J H Harris and R Julian

Surrey v Northamptonshire

THE OVAL: Surrey (7pts) drew with Northamptonshire (0).

Northamptonshire won toss

Surrey: 1st Innings

Northamptonshire: 1st Innings

Worcestershire v Essex

Worcestershire (20pts) bt Essex (4) by six wickets.

Worcestershire won toss

Essex: 1st Innings

Worcestershire: 1st Innings

Warwickshire v Durham

EDGBASTON: Warwickshire (10pts) drew with Durham (10).

Durham won toss

Warwickshire: 1st Innings

Durham: 1st Innings

Did not bat: J N Batty, I D K Salisbury, M P Bostell, A E Benjamin

Bowling: Maltby 23-5-72-1; Taylor 27-4-40-0; Bowley 16-5-12-1; R K Singh 10-1-66-1; G P Swann 10-1-31-1

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE - 1st Innings

R R Montgomery c Brown b Hollister 13

A J Swann c Batty b Hollister 28

S B Lowe not out 1

R Laver c Batty b Hollister 2

M C Bostell c Hick b Lampitt 7

P M Swann c Haynes b Lampitt 37

P M Swann c Haynes b Lampitt 37

Extras (btl, w) 102

Total (107 overs) 210

Fall: 1-68, 2-82, 3-142, 4-221, 5-221, 6-228, 7-228, 8-228, 9-228

Bowling: Newport 22-8-45-1; Shearer 24-6-80-4; Lampitt 23-5-61-4; Haynes 17-3-49-2; Laver 16-5-12-1; Bostell 10-1-66-1; G P Swann 10-1-31-1

Total (for 1, 13 overs) 46

Did not bat: W P C Westley, A Hales, A Shearer, R K Singh, P J Newport

Bowling: Coward 10-2-42-0; Kent 63-0-38-4; D R Law 1-0-11-0; Grayson 3-0-30-0; Such 3-0-34-0

Umpires: J H Hampshire and J F Steele

Yorkshire v Somerset

HEADINGLEY: Yorkshire (20pts) bt Somerset (4) by 219 runs.

Somerset won toss

Yorkshire: 1st Innings

Somerset: 1st Innings

Overseas: 48 for 3

S E Trescothick c & b White 22

S C Ebdon c & b White 15

P C L Hogg c & b White 5

G D Ross c & b Gough 15

A R Caddick c Bailey b White 0

K J Shine not out 15

Extras (btl, w) 10

Total (for 6, 44.3 overs) 122

Did not bat: D J Shadford, G Cripps, R J Green, P J Harris

Bowling: Newell 8-1-29-0; Kirby 8-0-41-2; Davis 8-1-28-1; Robinson 8-0-29-1; Martin-Jenkins 8-0-29-2

SUSSEX: W G Khan, C J Adams, R K Rao, K Greenfield, J R Carpenter, K Newell, P Moore, R S G Martin-Jenkins, R J Kirby, R P Davis, M A Robinson

Umpires: M J Kitchin and D R Shepherd

Starting today

SECOND DAY CHAMPIONSHIP (first day of three, 11.0 start): Canterbury: Kent v Yorkshire, Trent Bridge; Nottinghamshire v Derbyshire

Umpires: A Carlson and B Leadbaster

Weekend fixtures and pools forecast

FA Carling Premiership

1 Aston Villa v Bolton

2 Barnsley v Arsenal

3 Blackburn v Wimbledon

4 Chelsea v Liverpool

5 Everton v Sheffield Wednesday

6 Luton v Coventry

7 Tottenham v Newcastle

8 West Ham v Southampton

Playing Sunday: Derby v Leicester, Plymouth Monday: Crystal Palace v Man Utd

Nationwide Football League

First Division

9 Burn v Ipswich

10 Charlton v Trarnmer

11 Crewe v Bradford City

12 Manchester City v QPR

13 Norwich v Swindon

14 Oxford v Birmingham

15 Portsmouth v Huddersfield

16 Sheffield United v West Brom

17 Sunderland v Stock

18 Wolves v Stockport

Playing Friday: Port Vale v Middlesbrough, Reading Sunday: North Forest v Reading

Second Division

19 Blackpool v Bristol Rovers

20 Bournemouth v Burnley

21 Bradford v Telford

22 Bristol City v Walsley

23 Carlisle v York

24 Doncaster v Luton

25 Oxford v Southend

26 Plymouth v Gillingham

27 Reading v Grimsby

28 Wrexham v Preston North End

29 Wycombe v Chesham

Playing Friday: Wigan v Millwall

Third Division

30 Barnet v Maccles

31 Brighton v Hull

32 Carlisle United v North County

33 Colchester v Luton

34 Darlington v Lincoln

35 Hartlepool v Cardiff

36 Macclesfield v Chester

37 Northampton v Rochdale

38 Southport v Shrewsbury

39 Southport v Exeter

All playing (not on computer): Swans v Doncaster, Torquay v Peterborough

Bell's Scottish League

Premier Division

40 Celtic v Dundee

41 Dundee United v St Johnstone

42 Hearts v Rangers

43 Kilmarnock v Aberdeen

44 Motherwell v Dundee

First Division

45 Falkirk v Dunfermline

46 Morton v Arbroath

47 Perth v Dundee

48 Raith Rovers v Albion

49 St Mirren v Arbroath

50 Stirling Albion v Forfar

51 Stirling Albion v Forfar

52 Stirling Albion v Forfar

53 Stirling Albion v Forfar

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81 Stirling Albion v Forfar

82 Stirling Albion v Forfar

83 Stirling Albion v Forfar

84 Stirling Albion v Forfar

Ince driven by passion born of deprivation

The style of England's anchor against Portugal tonight was forged in childhood. Glenn Moore met him

PAUL INCE has played for some of European football's greatest clubs, won titles and championships and become the first black player to captain England, but he has still not fulfilled all the ambitions he had as a parentless schoolboy in Ilford.

While Ince justifiably wants to be recognised as more than just a hard-tackling, hard-running midfielder he accepts that it is his deep-seated passion for the game which marks him out and which drives him on in World Cup year.

"It comes from within," he said after training at Bisham Abbey yesterday. "I've been without my parents since I was 10 and without my father since I was two so I've always had to depend on myself. I've always had that desire to do well. I didn't do well at school so I wanted to be a footballer. I appreciate being a footballer because without football I wouldn't have anything else."

"These World Cup finals are very important to me," added the 30-year-old. "In 1994 we didn't qualify and I was very disappointed. Obviously the older you get you think it might not happen so it was important for me to qualify. It might be my last World Cup though you never know. Realistically, looking at people like David Beckham coming through, this is going to be my last World Cup. It is the pinnacle of the sport and it is important to play in a World Cup and do well."

Ince is confident England will do well in France and he only has to glance around him as he lines up for England against Portugal at Wembley tonight to know why. He will look at Alan Shearer ahead of him, turn and see at Tony Adams and David Seaman behind him, and feel an inner confidence. The backbones which took England to the brink of Euro '96 success will be back in harmony and, for Ince, it could not be more timely.

"Not many teams are better than us in the middle of the park, through the spine of the team," said Ince. "If you are strong in the centre you have a chance of winning the World Cup."

The quartet have only played

together once before under Hoddle and nine times in all for England. Only once, in their first union against the Netherlands in Rotterdam in late 1993 when they were all less experienced, have England been beaten.

The four did play the bulk of the Euro '96 games and Ince is pleased that they are coming together again as the World Cup build-up approaches a crucial stage.

Ince, who will be winning his 38th cap tonight, said of tonight's game: "Portugal are a good side and it's not an easy game to get a result in, but we've got a full squad back and playing at home we're expected to put on a good performance."

"We've still got to be upbeat, we've just had a couple of hiccups. We had a weakened side against Chile and got caught, while the Switzerland game was not the best performance but there is no reason for the bad vibes I've been hearing."

For himself, he hopes the appreciation he has among his peers will be extended to a wider audience by the World Cup. "I'm not a dirty player," he said. "The new ruling on tackles from behind doesn't worry me at all as I'm hard but fair and in midfield you don't really find yourself in a situation where you tackle from behind."

"I like to be involved but I don't think I'm physical. I've got more to offer. I score goals, I set up goals. There is more to my game than tackling but because I have a desire to win all the time people just look at that."

One recalls his pass for Shearer's goal in Poland as an example of his qualities which, under Hoddle, have been given freer expression in an England scene which provides a break from a disappointing end to Liverpool's season.

"We showed at Highbury and Old Trafford what a good team we are but we've under-achieved," he said. "No disrespect to the teams involved but we lost at home to Barnsley, Leicester and Southampton, that is where we lost the championship. But we're not far away."

If Hoddle has his critics then Daniel Passarella, Argentina's coach, has them in spades after a lamentable defeat by Israel in Jerusalem last Wednesday. The Walling Wall was wholly opposite as the press in Buenos Aires laid into a man whose lifting of the 1978 World Cup elevated him to near God-like status.

Nice players, shame about the team was the gist, so tonight's friendly should be somewhat spicier than some of the bland fare laid out in pre-France friendlies in recent months. Ireland need to find form in time for their European Championship qualifiers, which begin against Croatia in September. Argentina's needs are more urgent.

A settled side would help, although Passarella is hiding his best 11 splendidly. Fernando



Paul Ince (left) shares a mood of contemplation with his England colleague Ian Wright at Bisham Abbey this week

Photograph: Robert Halfon

Wright reveals rare grasp of striking dilemma

IT IS a well known fact that while Ian Wright has been synonymous with Arsenal for as long as anyone cares to remember, he does not possess a championship medal, having arrived at Highbury the season after their last success in 1991. It is also a fact, if a lesser known one, that since he was injured 10 weeks ago, the Gunners have not lost a match and as a consequence now stand on the brink of a second Double.

If all of this serves to tell the club's record goalscorer an unpalatable truth, he for one is not prepared to believe it. Indeed, the 34-year-old striker means to see off his young rivals and regain his place in the side before the end of the season in order

that he can play a purposeful part in the winning of that elusive championship medal, and also secure a place in England's World Cup squad. Not so long ago, a move to Benfica was seen as a fresh challenge for him. A transfer is now no longer an option, not while the club stand on the threshold of such exciting times. "I'll stay for the fight," he declared this week.

This is not wild optimism on the part of Wright, but a genuine belief in his own ability and a determination not to accept what many people may see as the inevitable march of time. In his absence, the young Frenchmen Nicolas Anelka and Christopher Wreh have blossomed after a sticky start to the point where it would be seen as pure folly on the part of Arsene Wenger, the coach, to risk unsettling the side by recalling Wright. And to his credit, Wright fully appreciates that.

"If I was Christopher Wreh or Nicolas Anelka I'd be really gutted if the boss left me out and put someone else in and I personally wouldn't want that," he said. "I've never had a problem coming off the bench in respect of trying to prove my worth and if I can do that and the boss still wants to play Nicolas or Christo-

pher, that's his prerogative and he won't get a problem from me with that. We've spoken about it at length."

If only all players were as understanding, most managers must think. Wright has learned to accept, no doubt with a little help from Wenger, that he is no longer an automatic choice at the club. During the last three months of inactivity, he has had to show considerable patience too, not a virtue, as he admits, with which he is readily associated. "It's been hard because I've been in a position I've never

been in in my life before, i.e. being injured as long as I have been while the team are genuine challengers for the Premiership."

His injuries, a hamstring, a torn cartilage and a groin, were not, he maintains, the result of advancing years but just "absolute bad luck". Clearly his sessions with Glenn Hoddle's faith healer, Eileen Drewery, have had a beneficial effect on his powers of positive thought. "I'm very pleased with the fitness at the moment. I look fantastic - my wife can vouch for that," he said. "I'll be ready to play this weekend but the boss will probably want to see me in a full week's training and flying."

The best that Wright can

probably hope for with regards his dual aims for club and country is a return to the Arsenal side once the championship has been secured, which, judging by United's recent indifferent form, could be with a couple of games to go. He could then prove to Hoddle his match fitness prior to England's last three warm-up matches before the finals.

Paul Ince for one is rooting for him: "I hope he goes," said the Liverpool midfielder. "I remember when he was left out in '92 for the European Championships after he had finished the season as top scorer and he was hurt by that. It's not just what he brings to the spirit of the side, but also his quality as a striker."

Brown sets Burley World Cup deadline

By Phil Shaw
in Edinburgh

CRAIG BURLEY'S prospects of sharing in Scotland's World Cup summer are up in the air today, exactly four weeks before the Celtic midfielder must board a transatlantic flight to accept that he will miss the finals.

On 20 May, the 22 players who will comprise Craig Brown's squad in France leave for the United States to play warm-up matches against the Americans and Colombia. Bur-

ley, having pulled out of tonight's friendly against Finland at Easter Road because of sciatica, must use the interim period to convince the Scotland manager that he could withstand the rigours of the most arduous tournament of all.

The former Chelsea player's absence from what is effectively a final eliminator for the US and France follows his withdrawal from last month's home defeat by Denmark. Burley normally plays wing-back for Scotland, yet has impressed as

playmaker during Celtic's championship push.

"It has been pointed out to Craig that we can't go to a World Cup with a doubt over anyone," said Brown, who tends to trust in physiotherapy rather than faith healing. "He has been having treatment in London and has now gone back to Celtic for some more, but he assures me he'll be OK."

Kevin Gallacher (throat infection) and Andy Goram (hamstring strain) added to Scotland's worries yesterday.

Should the Blackburn striker fail to recover in time, Celtic's Simon Donnelly is almost certain to start.

Scotland's record in friendlies under Brown is as ordinary as their competitive results have been outstanding. While he would settle for flopping against Finland and beating, or even holding, Brazil on 10 June, victory would clearly advantageous for morale. "If we don't beat a team who haven't qualified, doubts will be cast," he admitted.

The Finns, coached by

Denmark's triumphant manager from Euro '92, Richard Moller Nielsen, should provide stern if eminently beatable opposition. They were within minutes of reaching France before being thwarted by a Hungarian goal, and are likely to include the Rangers pair Antti Niemi and Jonatan Johansson, plus Motherwell's Simo Velekar and the Wolves striker Mixu Paatelainen.

Their presence has not exactly encouraged a run on tickets, despite this being the

capital's first round-ball international for six decades. Hibernian last hosted such a fixture 110 years ago, when a Scotland XI skippered by one R. Smellie (sic) trounced Wales 5-1 at the Old Easter Road site. A similar outcome tonight might be asking too much, but a side again lead by Colin Hendry will be expected to win with style.

SCOTLAND (probable 2-5-2): Leighton (Aberdeen); Callaghan (Dundee), Hendry (Blackburn), Doolan (Dundee), McManis (Lambert), Smith (Blackburn), Doolan (Dundee), Boyd (Blackburn), Doolan (Dundee), Smith (Blackburn).

McCarthy prepares for a tough night

By Guy Hodgson
in Dublin

ENGLAND versus Germany or Scotland would shade it in terms of football's historical significance but a rivalry bubbles quite healthily between the old country and Argentina. "Hand of God", "Animals", matches between them create more soundbites than Tony Blair's speech writer.

It is by no means beyond the bounds of probability that the two will meet again in the second round of the World Cup this summer - indeed it is a strong possibility - so tonight's friendly between the South Americans and the Republic of Ireland here will be watched with more than passing interest by Glenn Hoddle.

Whether the England coach will learn anything is less certain.

Redondo, an extravagantly gifted playmaker with Real Madrid, has not made it to Dublin partly because his long hairstyle did not appeal to the coach who is rumoured also to frown upon ear-rings. Gabriel Batistuta, a prolific scorer with his Italian club, Fiorentina, and his country, also fell out with him for nine months.

Passarella's hard-line line-up flopped against Israel and, as they play Brazil in Rio next Wednesday, they could conceivably arrive at the World Cup with spirits lower than their boot laces unless they find some form at Lansdowne Road tonight. "They'll have the full metal jacket on for our game," was how the Irish manager, Mick McCarthy, put it.

McCarthy's own emphasis on the European Championships is underlined by his in-

clusion of Wolves' 17-year-old Robbie Keane as a striker largely because the first choice, David Connolly, will be suspended for the first two qualifying games.

He will also give West Bromwich Albion's Kevin Kilbane a third cap as winger cum support striker in an attempt to find a cutting edge tonight. "If we've had a problem it's been scoring goals at home," McCarthy said. "I'm hoping Kevin can move forward and we take the game to them."

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND (probable): Given (Newcastle); Irwin (Manchester United), Breen (Coventry), Bala (Liverpool), Staunton (Aston Villa), Kelly (Leeds), Canavese (Derby), Kinsella (Charlton), Kilbane (West Brom), Quinn (Sunderland), Keane (Wolves).

ARGENTINA (2-5-2): Burgos (River Plate); Ayala (Nacional), Sensi (Parana), Vivas (Lugano, Swi), Almeyda (Lazio, It), Simeone (Internazionale, It), Vero (Sampdoria, It), Ortega (Valencia, Spa), Barri (River Plate), Batistuta (Fiorentina, It), Lopez (Valencia, Spa).

Murdock may Danish return for Schmeichel

THE return of the Manchester United goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel to international duty today will provide a welcome fillip for the club's manager, Alex Ferguson, as his side falter in their challenge for the championship.

Schmeichel's recovery, however, was tempered by the news that United's Norwegian international Ronny Johnsen needs surgery on his right knee for an injury suffered in United's game against Liverpool on 10 April.

Schmeichel was substituted during Saturday's 1-1 draw with Newcastle at Old Trafford but is now hopeful of playing for Denmark in their World Cup warm-up against Norway today.

Schmeichel said: "It is me alone who makes the decision. It is important for me to play this match and I am working day and night to be ready. I can already

feel that I am getting better."

The 34-year-old Dane suffered a thigh injury on Saturday and was expected to miss the reigning champions' last three Premiership matches.

The latest development will come as welcome news to Ferguson, with United still hoping that the League leaders, Arsenal, will slip up in the title race.

Johnsen, meanwhile, will miss tonight's friendly after doctors diagnosed the cartilage damage during training. "The pain was so intense that it was not realistic for him to play," the team doctor, Tyggve Kase, said.

Johnsen hopes Manchester United will approve an operation later this week and that he will be fully recovered in two to four weeks, missing United's three final games of the season.

Johnsen should recover in

time to join Norway in France.

Kase said: "If the operation is carried out within a week or two, he should be ready in time for the World Cup."

Arsenal's young striker Nicolas Anelka is included among France's four strikers for today's friendly against Sweden in Stockholm. Also hoping to impress is his Highbury team-mate Patrick Vieira and the West Ham goalkeeper Bernard Lama, who has displaced Fabien Barthez as under-21 to Auxerre's Lionel Charbonnier.

The Nigeria coach, Bora Milutinovic, is expected to travel from Germany to Gresty Road on Saturday to check on the form of the Crewe Alexandra goalkeeper, Ademola Bankole. Tonight the Olympic gold medal winners take on the European champions in Cologne.

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The referee who sent himself off

Football

AN AMATEUR referee who punched a player and then showed himself the red card has been banned from the game for six weeks.

Melvin Sylvester, a 42-year-old school caretaker, was refereeing a recreational match between the Southampton Arms and Hursbourne Tarrant British Legion in the Andover and District Sunday League.

Sylvester claimed he lost his temper when one of the players, 27-year-old Richard Curd, punched him. "I was sorely provoked. I punched him several times after he had pushed me from behind. He then swore. I couldn't take any more. I blew my top," he said.

Sylvester said he showed himself the red card, sending himself off. He was replaced by a spectator for the rest of the match.

The Hampshire Football Association imposed a six-week ban and a £20 fine on Sylvester, who has refereed more than 40 games in the past two years.

"I'm furious," he said. "The disciplinary committee have got their priorities all wrong. They've convicted me of assault but the circumstances have not

been shown. They've taken the side of the player."

Curd, who denied provoking the incident, was charged with insulting or abusive behaviour. His case will be heard shortly by the local football authorities.

Leading Italian referees are asking for a helping hand, or at least a third "eye". They have asked the world game's governing body, Fifa, if they can experiment with an electronic "eye" in the goalposts for Serie A matches.

The move follows a controversy at the weekend when a referee failed to see the ball cross Juventus' goal-line and ruled out what should have been an Empoli equaliser.

Italian FA's president, Luciano Nizzola, plans to invite a number of electronic companies to offer a solution to the goal-line problem. But any experiment in matches would require Fifa approval.

"I've been thinking about this for a few weeks," Nizzola said. We need to find a mechanism capable of showing unequivocally whether the ball has crossed the line.

"Obviously, we need Fifa's agreement, but our federation could put itself forward for experiments to determine 'certain goals' even from next season, for example."

Sunderland ticket offer to Newcastle

SUNDERLAND have extended the hand of friendship across one of football's fiercest club rivalries by offering Newcastle their full allocation of tickets for the FA Cup final.

The gesture, making extra tickets available for Magpies fans to cheer on their team in his year's Wembley final against Arsenal, is designed to promote relations between the two north-east clubs and their fans.

Both clubs were forced to ban away supporters from derby fixtures last season because of police advice. Sunderland's chairman, Bob Murray, said: "I was as disappointed as anyone at the situation between the two clubs but want to help build bridges for the future."

"I would like the Newcastle United board to respond positively to our offer because they also have an important role to play in improving relations in the region."

Sunderland have stressed that

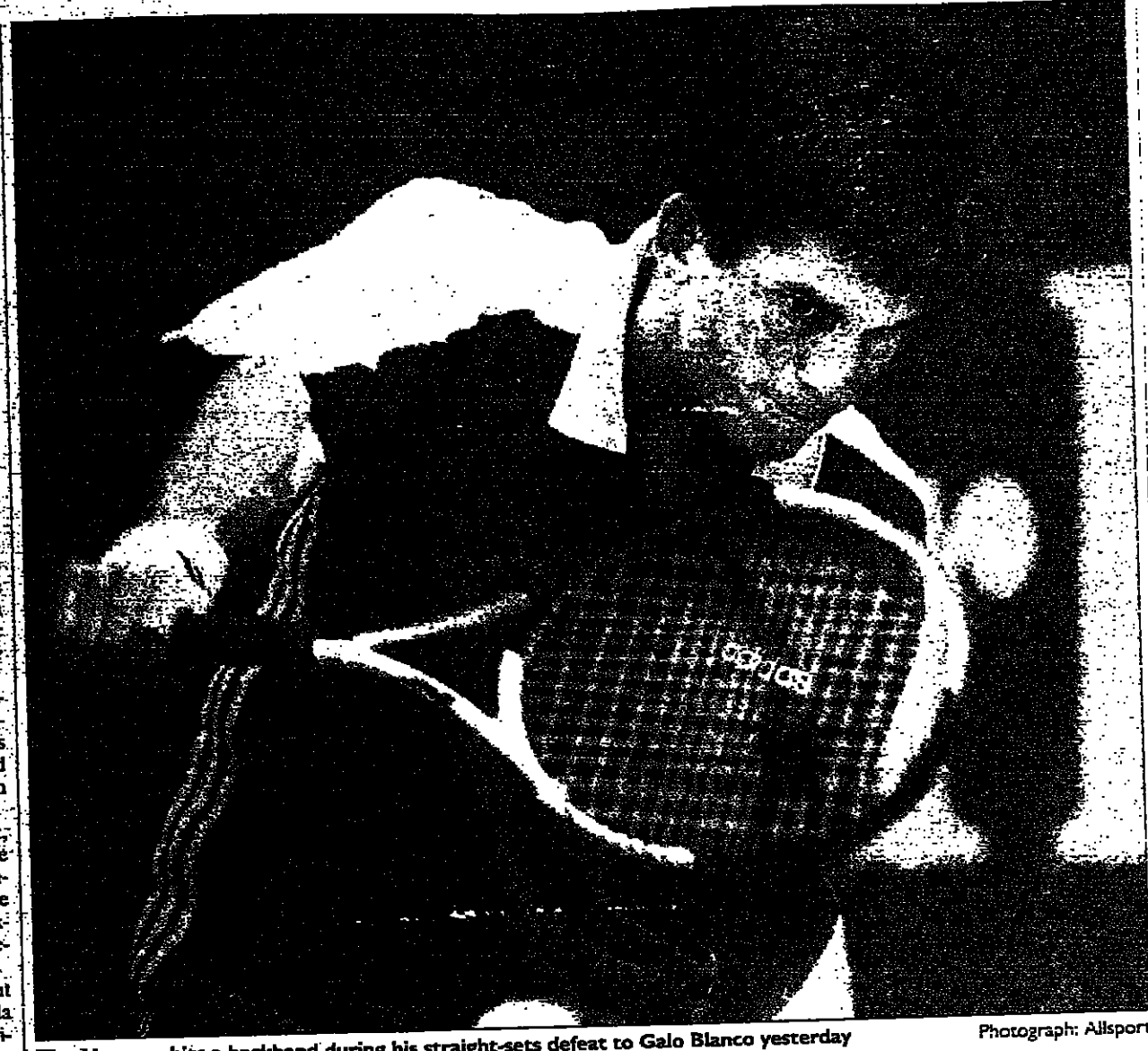
they would like their tickets to go to "traditional and loyal Newcastle United fans, not to bond holders or corporate supporters".

A spokesman for Newcastle's Independent Supporters' Association, John Regan, said: "Obviously we welcome the gesture from Sunderland and hope that these tickets do find their way to genuine supporters."

"We have some sympathy with Newcastle United because there are so many fans that some will have to be disappointed. But it is vital that the most loyal supporters are given priority, and we want the club to give a guarantee that this will be the case."

Sunderland, meanwhile, have increased the capacity of their Stadium of Light home to more than 41,000 for their final home game of the season against Stoke City on Saturday.

An extra 700 seats have been installed, and subject to safety approval, tickets will go on sale on Friday.



Tim Henman hits a backhand during his straight-sets defeat to Galo Blanco yesterday

Photograph: Allsport

Henman draws a Blanco

Tennis
By John Roberts
in Monte Carlo

IT IS not often that Tim Henman can be mentioned in the same breath as Thomas Muster as a clay court player, but both were made to appear novices on the slow red surface yesterday by Spanish opponents who went about their business confident of selecting the right shot at the precise moment.

Todd Martin was subjected to similar embarrassment. Crowned as a champion on clay in Barcelona on Sunday, the American was given a lesson in groundstroke play by his compatriot Andre Agassi in the first round of the Monte Carlo Open here.

Agassi's win, 6-2, 6-1, was a bonus for the spectators, who can look forward to a renewal of the rivalry between the Las Vegas and Pete Sampras. Sampras leads their head-to-head 12-9. They last played on clay in the quarter-finals of the 1992 French Open, Agassi winning in straight sets.

Henman, although ranked No 15 in the world, is a novice on clay, and that was painfully apparent as the 23-year-old from Oxford struggled to com-

pete against Galo Blanco, a product of the Barcelona stable whose comparative lack of height (5ft 8in) does not deter him from an aggressive baseline style. A qualifier here, his game was good enough to take him to the quarter-finals of the French Open last year.

Blanco's victory, 6-2, 6-4, was as comprehensive in its way as Carlos Moya's dismantling of Muster, 6-0, 6-3 in 59 minutes. The old king of clay and former world No 1 was up to counter the consistency of Moya's anticipation, movement and shot-making. "Maybe I'm trying too hard," said Muster, whose supremacy on clay has been in decline since he lost his opening match here last year.

Emerson on show in Eastbourne

ROY EMERSON, twice a Wimbledon singles champion, heads a stellar list of former Grand Slam winners in a special mixed doubles event to be staged at Devonshire Park, Eastbourne, on 15 June.

Emerson, the only man to win singles and doubles titles in all four Grand Slams, 12 in singles and 16 in doubles, joined the American Sherwood Stewart, South African Cliff Drysdale,

against the Frenchman Fabrice Santoro, when seeded No 2.

Muster, 30, has provided a beacon for Austrian tennis, although his play is to grass what Henman's is to clay. Henman's difficulty with Europe's favoured outdoor surface is common among British players. Buster Mottram, in 1981, was the last Brit to win a match here (against the Swiss Heinz Günthardt, now Steffi Graf's coach).

Henman made his debut in Monte Carlo yesterday backed by a clay-court record amounting to a Davis Cup win in Kiev and one victory on the main-stream ATP Tour, against a Spaniard, Roberto Carretero, who was ranked No 334 in the world when he retired hurt in

the first round of the Italian Open last year with Henman leading, 4-6, 7-5, 2-1.

Blanco's win yesterday would have been achieved with less fuss had his nerves not tightened when he was serving for the match at 5-2 in the second set. Henman, given a sign of hope, managed to break for the only time in the match. The British No 2 was unable to sustain his effort beyond an extraordinary penultimate game in which he double-faulted four times, hit two aces and saved five match points. Blanco then served out the match, winning with a typical backhand crosscourt pass on his seventh match point.

"I've got to learn to develop my game to be able to play on clay," Henman said. "It's a huge challenge for me. It's never going to be easy. I've got to serve consistently and be patient enough to create opportunities to move forward on my opponent's serve. I'm not going to beat a player like Blanco at his own game."

Henman intends to spend the remainder of the week practising here before competing in next week's tournament in Munich, where the ATP Tour's experiment with coaches on the court will afford David Felgate an opportunity to have a word with his protégé between sets.

Bond makes an early exit

Snooker

NIGEL BOND began his 1997-98 season in style by winning the Scottish Masters title last October in Motherwell. But his campaign at the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, ended limply yesterday as he lost 10-5 to left-hander Mark King at the Embassy World Championship.

Bond, the world No 8, lost eight frames out of a possible nine after establishing a 4-2 advantage in Monday night's opening session. "There was just nothing there," admitted the 1995 Sheffield runner-up to Stephen Hendry.

"As the season has gone on my confidence has drained away. In the last few tournaments I've just been going through the motions."

"To be honest I'll be glad to put the cue away because I've done my head in the way I've played recently."

Bond becomes the second top 16 player to miss out on a second-round place this year, leaving King to meet Alain Robidou or Matthew Stevens for a place in the quarter-finals.

King is now likely to gain promotion to the elite 16 next

season, replacing Thailand's James Wattana, who was beaten 10-9 by Fergal O'Brien on Sunday.

"To be honest I'm not even thinking about the rankings," said the 24-year-old Romford player. "I was under so much pressure out there it was unbelievable. Normally I'm good at coping with it but today I found it hard to deal with."

King appeared to have missed his chance of an easy win when just a handful of balls from victory. Clearing up, he missed the yellow off his own spot. Fortunately for him, though, Bond was playing too badly to take advantage - and King gratefully potted a frame-half blue.

Earlier, John Parrott had no problem adding four frames to his overnight lead of 6-3 against the Leeds qualifier Peter Lines. The 1991 world champion believes it will take a good player to stop him bridging a seven-year gap if he repeats his first-round standard.

Another top seed in trouble is the world No 15 Darren Morgan. The Welshman will resume this morning's 5-4 down against the Ulsterman Jason Prince, one of eight players making debuts at Sheffield this year.

Conference scents southern success

Rugby League

By Dave Hadfield

THE long held, but never realised, dream of becoming a truly national sport took a step closer to reality yesterday as the House of Commons hosted the launch of the Rugby League Conference.

The former Southern Conference, expanded from nine to 15 teams after a pilot season last year, now encompasses clubs from Chester to Crawley and Cheltenham to Ipswich - all outside the game's traditional boundaries. Several have already declared an interest in applying for membership of the Second Division of the Rugby League.

"I can see it happening and we will then replace them with other clubs coming through," the Conference's chairman, Lionel Hurst, said. "It will be a conveyor belt. It's going to go on and on until every sizeable town in the country has a rugby league team."

Many of the Conference clubs have struck up thriving partnerships with Super League teams and one, Worcester, has

changed its name to Worcester Saints because of the link with St Helens has been so good. Fixtures start on 9 May, leading to a grand final in Cheltenham on 8 August.

Sir Geoffrey Lofthouse, the chairman of the Parliamentary Rugby League Group, who hosted the launch, is urging the Heritage Secretary, Chris Smith, to add the Challenge Cup final to the list of protected events which must be shown on terrestrial television. Negotiations are well underway for a new three-year contract when the current one with the BBC ends next year, but Sir Geoffrey described his campaign as "an insurance policy".

A battle is brewing between rival bids from Cardiff and Swansea for a Super League franchise from next season.

Super League's managing director, Maurice Lindsay, has already described the Swansea application as the favourite, but a Cardiff consortium - including the former Wigan chairman Jack Robinson and the former Oldham coach Peter Tunks - is arguing that its proposal is stronger.

Sporting Digest

Lomu produces sprint record

Rugby Union

THE All Blacks wing Jonah Lomu set a New Zealand rugby print record yesterday during Auckland Blues' fitness testing.

Lomu recorded 1.6sec for the 0-metre sprint from a standing start - the fastest since data collection began four years ago.

The players were put through

management, the national fitness coordinator and the All Blacks panel were dissatisfied with their test results a fortnight ago.

All New Zealand Super-12 squads receive regular testing and the Blues were examined two days after their match against Queensland, when on average their times were lower than the other squads in the competition.

Bugner burgled while in ring

Boxing

IOE BUGNER'S joy at landing a world heavyweight title fight 25 years after losing to Muhammad Ali was soured by the discovery that thieves had unsacked his home while he was trading blows in the ring.

Bugner, 48, earned a chance at the vacant World Boxing Federation title against James

"Bonecrusher" Smith by winning the Pan Asian championship on Monday, only to return home and find his house had been burgled.

Lennox Lewis's mandatory World Boxing Council heavyweight title defence against Croatia's Zeljko Mavrovic has been given a purse-offer deadline of 29 May.

Baseball

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Basketball

NBA: New Jersey 101 Detroit 97; Philadelphia 107 Toronto 78; Atlanta 101 Miami 96; Charlotte 98 Orlando 78; LA Lakers 122 Utah 106; Seattle 98 Portland 90; Phoenix 103 Houston 83; San Antonio 98 Denver 92; Vancouver 102 Sacramento 108.

Final Standings

Atlantic Division: Miami 55, New York 43, New Jersey 43, Washington 42, Orlando 41, Boston 36, Philadelphia 31. Central Division: Chicago 62, Indiana 58, Cleveland 51, Atlanta 49, Detroit 47, Minnesota 46, Toronto 46. Eastern Division: New York 57, Boston 52, Philadelphia 51, Atlanta 49, Detroit 47, Minnesota 46, Toronto 46. Western Division: St Louis 57, Cincinnati 52, Philadelphia 51, Atlanta 49, Detroit 47, Minnesota 46, Toronto 46.

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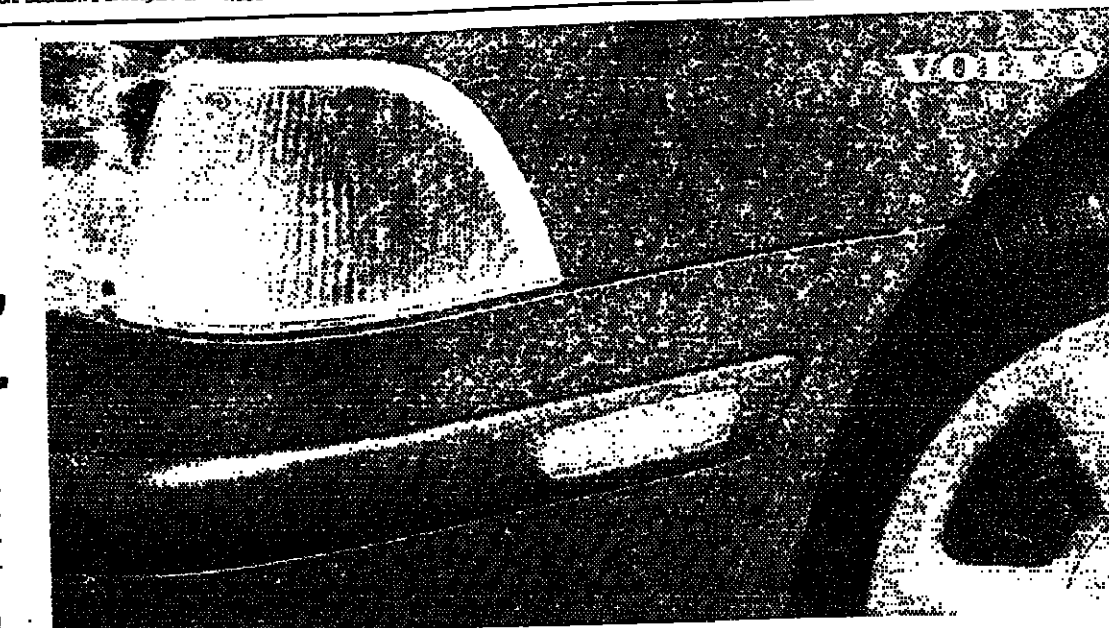
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England ready for leap of faith

By Glenn Moore
Football Correspondent

WHILE the news that England have moved their faith healer, Eileen Drewery, into the team hotel stretched the credulity of many England supporters, it was nothing to the leap of faith Portuguese fans were asked to make at the beginning of the month.

Three weeks ago, they awoke to a Portuguese radio report that Iran had pulled out of the World Cup for security reasons and Portugal had been offered their place.

This cruellest of April Fools' Day jokes merely served to exacerbate the sense of failure felt by a team which is widely regarded as the best not to qualify for the finals. How they have reacted to this failure will determine whether England have the toughest of tests or latest of World Cup warm-ups at Wembley tonight.

After a home defeat by Chile and a disappointing draw in Switzerland, there is an argument for England enjoying a morale-boosting big victory, but since that should come with the visit of Saudi Arabia next month, a decent work-out would be more useful.

Although Paul Gascoigne is unlikely to be fit, England will be close to full strength and Glenn Hoddle will learn most from seeing his team stretched. It is a view shared by Paul Ince, who said: "We could play easy teams and roll them over 5-0, but personally I would rather have a team that is a test."

Gascoigne, assuming he does not experience an overnight miracle – and Hoddle has not misled us about his ankle and groin injuries – will be one of several players who do not appear to have reaped any immediate benefit from

Mrs Drewery's arrival in the team hotel.

The most serious casualty is Jamie Redknapp, who was sent back to Liverpool yesterday with knee-ligament damage which will keep him out for the season and thus almost certainly rob him of a World Cup place.

"It is not as bad as first feared but it will still be a three to four-week job in the sidelines," the England coach said. That is beyond the end of the season and Hoddle added: "Let's hope he can get back earlier – some people do come back more quickly – but in terms of the World Cup he has got to come back before the end of the season for sure."

This is a severe blow to both Hoddle and the player whose international career seems jinxed – Redknapp played just 40 minutes before being taken off in Euro 96 and is regularly injured in or just before England games.

On the very few times he and Gascoigne have played together they have looked a well-matched partnership and Hoddle would have liked the chance to see if an Ince-Gascoigne-Redknapp midfield offered more than the present, more negative, Ince-Gascoigne-Batty combination.

With Paul Merson and Steve McManaman also in need of healing, Hoddle may now ask Paul Scholes to fill the creative void left by Gascoigne's absence. Another option is provided by David Beckham, but he will probably start wide before moving inside to give Ray Parlour a first cap on the right flank. The rest of the side should be close to the one which will line up against Tunisia in 55 days time, with Teddy Sheringham, although struggling for club form with Manchester United, alongside Shearer in attack.

"Not many players feel as much at home as Teddy does

when he pulls on an England shirt," Hoddle said. "He seems to thrive on playing at international level."

The Portuguese, nimble-footed passers and dribblers, are seen as the nearest equivalent to Romania, England's second World Cup opponents. Having controversially failed to qualify from Germany's group, they now have a new manager, Humberto Coelho.

Although an outstanding defender in Benfica's golden era, he was a surprising choice because, having briefly coached Salgueiros and Braga in the mid-Eighties, he has since concentrated on running football schools and working in the media.

For his first match he has lost the inspirational Fiorentina midfielder Rui Costa to a thigh injury, but can still include players from Barcelona and Juventus as well as from the usual Portuguese powerhouses such as Benfica and Sporting Lisbon.

Nuno Gomes, the promising Benfica forward, is one to look out for along with the more established talents of Joao Pinto, Luis Figo and Paulo Sousa. Celtic and West Ham fans may also get a reminder of the mercurial talents of, respectively, Jorge Cadete and Dani.

The likes of Michael Owen, Dion Dublin and Rio Ferdinand will also be hoping for a chance to shine as, after this match, Hoddle will be picking just one more squad before the one that matters.

"These matches are very important games for those on the fringe," Ince said. "People like Michael Owen will be thinking: 'I've had a good season, I've got a chance'. Most people could name 16 or 17 of the final 22, but there are places up for grabs."

ENGLAND (probable): Seaman (Arsenal); Southgate (Aston Villa); Adams (Arsenal); Campbell (Tottenham); Beckham (Man Utd); Ince (Liverpool); Scholes (Man Utd); Batty (Newcastle); Le Tissier (Reading); Shearer (Man Utd); Sheringham (Man Utd); Shearer (Newcastle).



Decisions, decisions: Glenn Hoddle has injury worries clouding his plans for Wembley tonight. Photograph: Robert Hallam

Maldini acts over Italians' striking problem

ITALY'S goalscoring problems have prompted their coach, Cesare Maldini, to unveil a three-pronged attack for tonight's friendly against Paraguay.

Alessandro Del Piero and Christian Vieri, former club team-mates at Juventus, and the winger Francesco Moriero will start together in the first of two matches Italy has left before the World Cup finals in France.

"I want to test an offensive-minded team and Moriero is the right player for this. His imaginative moves and dribbling can produce better scoring chances," Maldini said.

The coach had opted for two forwards throughout qualifying for the finals, and Italy struggled to score. Moriero, earning his second cap, has scored three goals and set up several others during his first campaign with Internazionale. Del Piero and Vieri, who played at Juve together for one year, have scored more than 50 goals between them this season.

The trio will face a Paraguayan team missing two key defenders. Catalino Rivarola, who plays in Brazil, and River Plate's Celso Ayala are sidelined with calf injuries. To compensate, the Paraguay coach, Paulo Cesar Carpegiani, has adopted for a cautious four-man back line. "We are not going to take undue risks against Italy," Carpegiani said.

The key threat will be from Del Piero, the 23-year-old has been in fine form since September, scoring 30 goals for the defending Serie A champions, 20 in league matches and 10 in the cup. He has scored five goals in 14 games for Italy.

"I discovered him with the Under-21 national team. He has made impressive improvements since then," Maldini said.

Vieri, who left Juventus in the summer to join Atletico Madrid, confirmed his scoring talent in the Spanish league. He is the leading scorer with 22 goals. The sturdy forward netted one of the goals which allowed Italy to overcome Russia on a 2-1 aggregate in a World Cup qualifying play-off.

Angelo Peruzzi will start at goalkeeper against Paraguay, with the 20-year-old Parma keeper Gianluigi Buffon ready to replace him in the second half. Inter's Gianluca Pagliuca, who was not called up for this game, has been named as the reserve keeper for France.

Maldini said other half-time changes are possible, to give international experience to newcomers such as defenders Luigi Sartor and Mark Juliano and midfielder Luigi Di Biagio. Italy's defence will rely on the Milan stalwarts Paolo Maldini and Alessandro Costacurta along with Lazio's Alessandro Nesta and Parma's Fabio Cannavaro. ITALY (probable): Peruzzi; Nesta, Maldini, Costacurta; Sartor, Di Biagio, Di Matteo, Albertini, Moriero, Del Piero, Vieri. PARAGUAY (probable): Carpegiani; Rivarola, Jarama, Garza, Ayala, Erickson, Aguirre, Acosta, Rojas, Benitez.

Published by Newspaper Publishing PLC, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, and printed at Mirror Colour Print, St Albans Road, Watford. Back issues available from Historic Newspapers, 01988 840370. Wednesday 22 April 1998. Registered as a newspaper with the Post Office.

Strachan escapes stricture

By Andrew Martin

GORDON STRACHAN, the Coventry City manager, has escaped with a warning after admitting a Football Association charge of making insulting comments to a referee.

Strachan was charged after calling Stephen Lodge "a joke" and "an absolute disgrace" following Coventry's 2-2 draw with Arsenal at Highfield Road in January. During the match, Strachan had been angered when the official turned down a penalty appeal by the home side and then sent Paul Williams off for a professional foul on Dennis Bergkamp.

The Coventry manager accepted the charge of insulting behaviour, when he appeared at the FA disciplinary hearing yesterday.

John Hartson's ban has been extended to five games, forcing the West Ham striker to miss the first Premiership game of

next season. Hartson was found guilty of misconduct by the FA following his sending-off at the Reebok Stadium on 21 February. He had been banned for three matches for punching the Derby defender Igor Stimac at Upton Park on 11 April and that mandatory suspension was stretched to four games by the

FA because it was his second red card of the season.

Howard Kendall expects to hear by the end of the week the results of further tests on John Spencer's heart murmur before completing the Scottish international's transfer from Queen's Park Rangers for £1.5m. The Everton manager said:

"If you're a playboy and are not there, then you can't win the FA Cup and be second in the League – that's impossible," he said. "It's a very unfair thing to say – that's what I don't like. Making statements that are not true can hurt your reputation."

Gullit, who was suddenly replaced by Gianluca Vialli as manager in January, maintained that his record in taking

the Blues to the FA Cup last season and guiding them to second place in the Premiership, the Coca-Cola Cup semi-finals and Cup-Winners' Cup quarter-finals this season spoke for itself.

"If you're a playboy and are not there, then you can't win the FA Cup and be second in the League – that's impossible," he said. "It's a very unfair thing to say – that's what I don't like. Making statements that are not true can hurt your reputation."

Gullit hits back at 'playboy' jibe

RUUD GULLIT yesterday denied that he been a "part-time, playboy manager" at Chelsea, and said he was "extremely hurt" by the comments of the Chelsea chairman, Ken Bates, in the club's programme – in which the Dutchman was alleged to have neglected his duties in favour of his commercial interests.

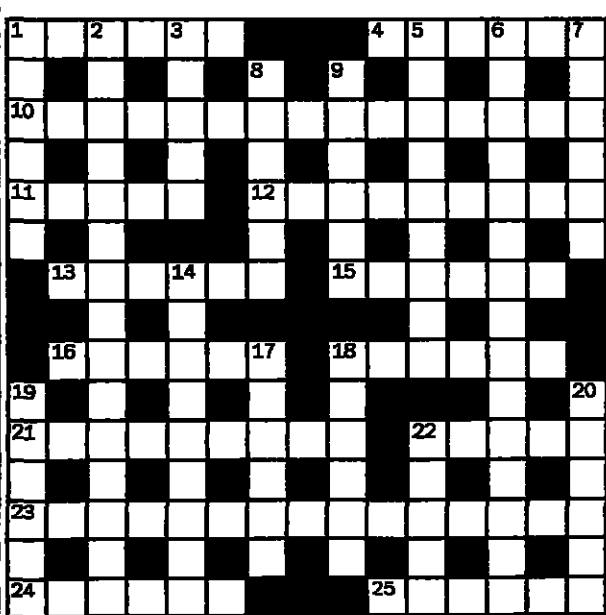
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THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3591. Wednesday 22 April

By Aquila

Tuesday's Solution



RESCUING TRUMPET
E U D R H N O A
CABLE TELEVISION
I S N G H I S N
TWIST STEVEDORE
A S I F N R
LATECOMER GYPSY
E A I O E
PANEL SEMILUNAR
H C P L E
EXECUTIVE CHIEF
U C L O N I T I
UNRECORDED
O E E E B E U
EMPEROR RESERVE

ACROSS

- Christian associated with this charity? (6)
- Drunken pairs, opening Liebfraumilch, find corkscrow (6)
- Profit from complaint (8,7)
- Old comic peacock (5)
- Of course, oldest bus breaks down! (9)
- Climbs with balance (6)
- Model philanthropist inside ancient Greek city (6)
- Sheriff's men begin tracking with a warm drink (6)
- Hull supporters changing horses (6)
- Gradually introduced one, with name silenced (9)
- Extravagant with C-note in Scandinavian money (5)
- Advance theories of superior situation in the papers? (15)
- Plant disease engulfs two quarters of apple (6)
- Discernment of a copper taking chops on (6)

DOWN

- In manner of doctor, leaving note nearby? (6)
- Time out? (15)
- Flower poles in Scottish river (5)
- Unpolitic form of exactitude (9)
- Monster from here destroyed, in a mess? (11-4)
- Up-to-date news of city trial (6)
- Incidental remarks for a Sunday, 15th of March (6)
- A spring crowd? (6)
- Langour of girl "with it", due to come out? (9)
- Bulbs lit up, possibly, on Sunday (6)
- Cruel type seen in the Tulsa district (6)
- Tail of sand-piper variegated, like the water-ouzel (6)
- Exercise, wearing fewer clothes (6)
- Egyptian church does not open for a releaser of spirits (5)

TimeOut by Cadbury



...Make the Break